

FEAR AND LEARNING IN A NUCLEAR CRISIS:

A Psychological Study of the Resolution and Implications  
of the Cuban Missile Crisis

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*[Signature]*

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Mr. McNamara:

...I can recall leaving the White House after it had been decided which message to reply to and after the reply had been drafted and approved by the President, and it was being sent out. It was a Saturday evening. I can remember the sunset. We left about the time the sun was setting in October and I, at least, was so uncertain as to whether the Soviets would accept [our offer]...that I wondered if I'd ever see another Saturday sunset like that...That may sound over-dramatic, but that was the way I was feeling at the time. It was that serious a problem. That was Saturday night [October 27, 1962]. [I was worried about] the possible effect on our country of even one of those warheads - nuclear warheads - being launched against us.

Mr. Ball:

Bob, you and I were walking through the Rose Garden the following morning and the weather was the most beautiful I could ever recall. And I said, walking through the Rose Garden, this reminds me of a Georgia O'Keeffe painting - of a rose coming up through an ox skull.

Robert S. McNamara and George  
W. Ball, from a transcript of  
a videotaped discussion of the  
Cuban missile crisis, June,  
1983



He who is educated by dread is educated by possibility...when such a person, therefore, goes out from the school of possibility, and knows...that terror, perdition and annihilation dwell next door to every man, and has learned the profitable lesson that every dread which alarms may the next instant become a fact, he will then interpret reality differently.

Søren Kierkegaard, The  
Concept of Dread, 1844

(ignoring JFK ultimatum, and his refusal to back down!)  
Emphasis on (JFK's) restraint, "stop" action to avoid war  
19, 22, 24, 32 43, 44, 48, 62 : 153 129 (130) (133) 135 (189)

K's fear: 262

Nuclear "inadvertence":

though US FU ? 30  
("NATO")

supposedly described: 34

alleged NKU commitment: "New war must never be fought"  
70-78

DePue, Aug, 1973:  
167

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I. PROLOGUE: FEAR AND LEARNING IN A NUCLEAR CRISIS

...Life is an epigram calculated to make people aware.

Kierkegaard, Journals, 1848

Early in the evening of Sunday, October 28, 1962, "The Ted Mack Amateur Hour" was preempted by a CBS News special report on the Cuban missile crisis. The report was interspersed with several commercials for products which normally sponsored the "Amateur Hour." In a juxtaposition of inadvertent, cosmic irony toward the end of the report, Ted Mack, appearing fatherly, relaxed and very friendly, asked the members of his audience to consider trying Sominex, a sleeping pill, to alleviate what he called "simple nervous tension" before bedtime. This commercial came directly after remarks like the following from Charles Collingwood, narrator of the special report on the missile crisis:

Wednesday [October 24, 1962] the quarantine line went into effect at 10:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time. There was some speculation whether that hour would be remembered as the day World War III began...[But] this is the day [October 28] we have every reason to believe that the world came out from under the most terrible threat of nuclear holocaust since the end of World War II.<sup>1</sup>



If there was ever a sleepless week in American history tailor-made for Sominex, October 22-28, 1962 was it! Tens of millions of Americans were glued to their television sets, feeling deeply fearful and totally vulnerable in a way and to an extent that was unprecedented. Collingwood spoke for all of those who had stocked up on canned goods, moved into their basements, headed for the mountains or simply been paralyzed into frightened inactivity. It is entirely reasonable to suppose that this week in October, 1962 found Americans more expectant and fearful of all-out nuclear war than any other week in our history. And in at least one case, this fear was so profound that it gave rise to the fatalistic fantasy that nuclear war had already commenced. An American couple, serving in the Peace Corps in Thailand, reported hearing (and believing) that during the pivotal week of the missile crisis New York City, where their families lived, had just been destroyed in a Soviet nuclear attack.<sup>2</sup> This was indeed a week of "simple [but profoundly nuclear] nervous tension."

All this fear and trembling over the implications of the Soviet missiles in Cuba might easily be discounted by serious students of nuclear policy as the hyperbolic raving of the ignorant masses, fed by a sensationalist media seeking their attention. One might therefore regard the extreme, and in many respects unprecedented popular reactions to the missile crisis as mere mass hysteria, an epiphenomenal sidelight to the real



drama being played out in Washington, Moscow, Havana, and on the the high seas. In fact, this has been the dominant "professional" view of the missile crisis since its occurrence: It was conducted and resolved according to complex calculations of power and bluff made by men who acted pretty much like cool, experienced poker players. Lately, another view has gained favor among a growing number of students of nuclear crises: That the policy-makers who managed the missile crisis acted exactly like the ordinary citizens who provided a ready-made, panicky, receptive audience for Ted Mack's pitch for Sominex. According to this view, the American policy-makers, scared out of their wits and good sense, entered needlessly into an escalatory spiral of threats and counter-threats which very nearly brought on a nuclear holocaust. We were thus simply lucky to have escaped without a catastrophic war.

I argue in this essay that both these views contain important truths but that both are also highly misleading. There is no question that the calculation, central planning and control during the missile crisis, at least on the American side, was unprecedented in any peacetime operation. Yet these calculations did not, as one would have predicted based on extravagant American conventional and nuclear superiority, lead the American government to attack and destroy the missile bases in Cuba. Moreover, there can also be no question whatever that during the missile crisis, leaders on both sides were profoundly

ask Pamela

fearful. For example, British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan, who spoke daily by telephone with President Kennedy during the pivotal week, was quite forthcoming about the way the week affected him. On Sunday, October 28, the same day as Collingwood's newscast, MacMillan reports having "a sense of anti-climax, after days during which it was difficult to restrain yet necessary to conceal our emotions; on that Sunday afternoon my colleagues and I were able to share the feeling, if not of triumph, yet of relief and gratitude. We had been on the brink, almost over it."<sup>3</sup> These feelings were echoed by Nikita Khrushchev, who recalled that week as a time when "the smell of burning hung in the air," and by Presidential Special Counsel Theodore Sorensen, who recalled with horror what it was like for John Kennedy to look directly down "the gun barrel of nuclear war."<sup>4</sup> Yet in spite of this fearfulness and atmosphere of expectant foreboding, the policy-makers did not crack; a way out was found. War was avoided. Thus the key policy-makers appear to have been neither totally rational or totally irrational, as the commonest competing interpretations would have it. Fear was important, but in spite of its magnitude, it did not lead to a failure of deterrence or even conventional war, let alone nuclear war.

My thesis is this: That fear in the missile crisis produced the learning required to escape it unscathed by war. I believe that an appreciation of the role of fear in the missile crisis is an absolutely essential prerequisite to an accurate



understanding of why it was resolved peacefully and, in addition, to understanding the psychological core of the nuclear peace since 1962. The key to the entire puzzle, I argue, is to comprehend how fear in the leaders of the superpowers during the missile crisis was both profound and adaptive - that is, how the fear of holocaust led to peaceful resolution in the crisis and to highly successful nuclear crisis prevention since that time and the heart of the connection between fear and learning in a nuclear crisis is the discovery and elucidation of the object of fear: Nuclear inadvertence. As the crisis wore on, as control appeared to slip away, as the unintended consequences of actions appeared to be leading directly to unwanted holocaust, the principal policy-makers, in a moment of collective and crystalline insight and action, grasped hold of the perverse situation and reversed its trajectory.

IC, yes!  
JFK?

In other words, by the end of the crisis, we may witness in hindsight a rapid and nearly total rapprochement between the fear of the leaders of the most powerful nations of the world and the fear of the citizens of these nations - of those who appeared constantly on television during the week of October 22-28, and those whose eyes were fixed on the black-and-white images of the newsmakers. Each group, leaders and led, came to see the Cuban missile crisis as evolving into something like a Greek tragedy of the nuclear age, the relentless march of fate toward undesired oblivion. But, as the leaders recognized just in time, this feared nuclear inadvertence came not from the gods

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*Instability*

but was rather something they had themselves constructed in their pursuit of foreign policy aims. This insight occurred mutually to the leaders of the superpowers and its implications are immense for our understanding of the missile crisis, the nuclear age since the crisis, and the prospects for continued nuclear peace.

II. INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOVERING PSYCHOLOGICAL  
LIFE IN A NUCLEAR CRISIS

It is perfectly true, as philosophers say,  
that life must be understood backwards. But  
they forget the other proposition, that it  
must be lived forwards.

Kierkegaard, Journals, 1843

The title of this book is meant to be overtly ambiguous  
and thus covertly more than a little subversive. "A nuclear  
crisis" refers in this essay to two entities: First, to some  
hypothetical future crisis between the superpowers in which the  
possibility arises in the minds of leaders that their  
confrontation might end in nuclear war. Articulating such a  
scenario is the paramount prerequisite for anyone writing about  
the risk of nuclear war. The task is to imagine in some detail  
the conditions under which a crisis might result in holocaust.  
But second, and far more controversially, "a nuclear crisis"  
refers to the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and only to the  
missile crisis. I believe this episode has no psychological  
analogue. At the level on which I intend to discuss its outcome  
and implications - the psychological level - there has been  
nothing like it in the nuclear age, let alone in the pre-nuclear  
era. I believe it is the only episode in history in which the  
leaders of great powers grew so fearful of what they took to be  
an impending catastrophe, so wary of their ability any longer to

1973?!



prevent the inadvertent, nearly instantaneous and probably irremediable destruction of their societies, that they sought and secured a peaceful resolution of the crisis in which they had entrapped themselves. Thus, what follows is a case study in the strict sense: An examination of the evolution of the psychological life of leaders during the missile crisis, and an attempt to extract its meaning for us today. I do not compare it with other international crises because, along what I take to be the salient psychological dimension of the missile crisis - evolving fear of inadvertent nuclear war - there is simply no other event which warrants comparison with it. 1973?

Except for the first two citations with which the book begins, all the epigrams are from Kierkegaard, and for two reasons. First, I want to emphasize the insights which are available to those of us who study psychological aspects of nuclear risks if we turn back to thinkers who are not hamstrung by the present grandiose convolutions and pretensions of "behavioral science." Indeed, perhaps the central impediment to an accurate understanding of the meaning and significance of psychological life in a nuclear crisis is the present great love of many psychologists and some political scientists for abstract psychological theory and the concomitant disdain for concrete psychological facts. We need help from a psychological thinker like Kierkegaard, who didn't take his theories anywhere near as seriously as is customary for psychologists today. Second, and far more important, Kierkegaard is the great psychologist of

a type of  
uncertainty - situation

fear and trembling, of dread and the raw feeling of utter uncertainty in the face of events which are momentous and fateful, yet nonetheless scarcely controllable or even comprehensible. Kierkegaard well understood, as most students of the psychology of avoiding nuclear war do not, that the experience of moving forward through the perplexing maze of what will become history often bears little resemblance to the experience of what has become history. And as Kierkegaard emphasized so often and so eloquently, fear of an unknown and highly uncertain outcome is what is characteristically omitted from after-the-fact accounts. Looking backward, we know how the missile crisis turned out - peacefully. From our vantage point, we can never not know this. But looking forward, as indeed the managers of "a nuclear crisis" (in both senses, past and future) must, we can never have this knowledge. If we therefore wish to understand the psychological requirements for nuclear peace in a crisis, we ought to try to recover the psychological lives of the managers of the missile crisis, as they were lived forward. Of course, we can never be anything like completely successful in this endeavor. But as I argue throughout this essay, the mere attempt at psychological recovery of this sort leads one in new, fruitful and policy-relevant directions. After all, if there is another nuclear crisis of the sort and severity we saw in October, 1962, it too must be lived forward, uncertainly, its participants ignorant and fearful of its eventual outcome.

frustration



I have discovered in discussing the missile crisis and nuclear policy with specialists over the past several years that the psychological approach I advocate is far from self-evidently valid to them. I am often regarded as, in a word, naive - naive to believe that the missile crisis is psychologically unique, that feared inadvertence is (or should have been) central to its resolution, and naive to think that the recovery of the psychological lives of leaders, as lived and experienced, is what the psychology of avoiding nuclear war should be about. These critics, I admit, are fundamentally correct. In fact, I do believe that theoretical and disciplinary naivete is precisely what is required to move this field, so abstract and divorced from evolving psychological reality, closer to a truly empirical data-base. Obviously, for analysts weaned on game theory, micro-economics, comparative political "science" and, more recently, on the psychologies of stress and decision-making, my mode of analysis is likely to seem foreign and rustic. In the endeavor to articulate a psychology of avoiding nuclear war, I am the primitivist, like Grandma Moses; they are representatives of the analytical avant garde, like an Oldenberg or Rauschenberg. It is of course impossible for one book to revolutionize psychological predilections which are deeply embedded in the wide variety of disciplines which claim nuclear policy and strategy as part of their domain.

But an approach which is relatively foreign and simple need not necessarily be regarded, I think, as simplistic and irrelevant. An important assumption underlying the argument of this book is that if the missile crisis and the subsequent nuclear peace is apprehended in a way that is closer to what amounts to a common sense explanation, and less a deduction from some implicit or explicit psychological theory, we will get much nearer to the psychological core of a nuclear crisis and to the linchpin of nuclear deterrence - fear of inadvertent nuclear war. In the hope of showing that my proposal, though radical in relation to present disciplinary norms, nonetheless has a substantial ring of home truth to it, I offer the following anecdote, borrowed and adapted from Robert Romanyshyn. If one story cannot quite convey the prima facie credibility of a dozen case comparisons or a thousand references to learned psychological literatures, perhaps it can still persuade the reader of the common sense of the psychological analysis of a nuclear crisis which occupies much of this essay.

The following is a methodological parable emphasizing the critical importance of recovering the psychological life of a fearful experience. It describes a perfectly ordinary experience which is possible for anyone. Yet in its emphasis upon psychological recovery, upon fear, and upon the centrality of the experienced fear in accounting for behavior, the parable comes uncannily close to the heart of the argument of this book, in which an attempt is made to recover the psychological life of



an experience which leaders of the nuclear superpowers came to know only too intimately in October, 1962: The fear that one is participating in a perverse process leading eventually to inadvertent nuclear war.

The Experience: Living Forward.

It is a dark evening, and my car is the only one on this deserted country road. I am preoccupied with the events of the day, thinking about the things I have not yet done and those which I still must do when I arrive home. Thinking of these things, I have more or less given my eyes over to the task of searching the road. They are there on the road before me, guiding the car through my hands and feet before I do. Suddenly my foot presses the brake and the car jerks to a halt. It takes a moment for the one who was considering the events of the day to rejoin his eyes on the road. But when I do it is easy to see why my foot pressed the brake so suddenly. There in front of me, at a distance which is already too close looms a dark and sinister-looking shape. That is what I saw, that is what my eyes saw while I was thinking of the day.

I wait, and as I wait that shape in the distance begins to change. What was only a moment before a dark and sinister shape now appears to be the twisted and gnarled trunk of a tree which has fallen across the



road. I blink my eyes and I move my head slightly forward to get a better look. But the light is dim and I still cannot quite make out what I am seeing. Cautiously and not without some misgiving I leave my car and approach the object in the road. Now at this distance I am sure. Yes, there is no doubt about it. Lying across the road is a fallen twisted tree trunk. I certainly will not be able to drive my car around it. I will have to turn around and take another way home...

The Explanation: Looking Backward.

What is the reality which is there on the road to be seen? The answer to this question seems obvious. It is a fallen, twisted tree trunk which is on the road. That is a fact, and with this knowledge of the facts I am convinced that the dark sinister shape which I saw earlier was a mistake. A moment ago I was in error about what I saw and this later experience proves it. What I see now corrects what I saw before. The fact replaces an illusion.

The Importance of Recovering Psychological Life.

We should not however be so ready to accept this answer which seems so obvious, because it discounts the earlier experience too readily. To be more precise this

obvious answer commits a retrospective fallacy. It replaces an earlier experience with a later one, and in this process it establishes an illusion where none previously existed. At the moment when I saw the dark and sinister shape, I was not seeing an illusion. The dark and sinister shape was there before me on the road, and the conduct of my foot proves it. If I do not want to deny that earlier experience, I cannot deny that first appearance as unreal....

Looking backward at living Forward: The Return of the Fear.

To appreciate this point [the psychological reality of the first experience] consider what might happen when I return to my car to recommence my journey home. Initially I may feel embarrassed by my earlier fear. How silly of me, I might think, to have reacted so emotionally. Confident now with this later knowledge and engaged in scolding myself for being so foolish, my eyes may again catch one more glimpse of that object on the road as I turn my car around to drive home. And again out of the corner of my eye I may see that dark and sinister figure, and in that moment I will not be able to suppress an anxious feeling. Despite what I have just recently seen, despite what I know, I cannot deny that I am only too ready to leave this place.<sup>1</sup>

This parable of fear, action and reflection poses a fundamental question for anyone engaged in almost any sort of psychological inquiry. Where does the inquiry begin? Do we take the path of experimental science and begin by seeking a detached, objective view of the situation as it "really" exists (or existed)? Do we then follow this up with an attempt to measure the psychological distance between what we take to be objective reality and the mere appearance of it, according to some individual or group? And do we finally seek to explain some event by attributing it to error or illusion? In this way of explaining behavior, the efficacy of human action is said to be the difference between what individuals would have done if they had known as much as the psychologists (or other analysts) examining their behavior and what, in their ignorance, they actually did.

The parable demonstrates, I believe, just how hegemonically persuasive this kind of explanation is to modern sensibilities. We begin, in the marvelous phrase of the philosopher Thomas Nagel, seeking "the view from nowhere," a neutral corner of the universe from which objects and situations will appear as they really are, not just as we believe they really are.<sup>2</sup> Nearly every vector in the contemporary intellectual Zeitgeist pushes us to begin our psychological inquiry there - nowhere in particular, within no one's view at all - so that we can claim in the end to have achieved an objective explanation of whatever it is we wish to understand. But if we try to begin with a view from nowhere then we stand, I



believe, for the annihilation of psychological life as it is experienced, and the elevation of abstraction, especially theories of human behavior. Thus in the parable, the driver may be seen simply to have made an error, an incorrect judgment. Perhaps, having learned of his error, his judgment in the future will improve. In any case, we will want to use this data - the estimated psychological distance between fact and illusion - as part of our effort to construct an ever more inclusive and predictive theory of human perception and behavior. Using our corroborated theory, we would hope thereby to suggest ways of narrowing the gap between illusion and reality.

Alternatively, as the narrator of the parable suggests, we may choose to begin our inquiry with a view from somewhere - somewhere deep inside the viewpoint of the person whose action we seek to understand. If this is where we choose to begin - where experiencing persons begin - then we will seek not a factual assessment of the gap between perceptual illusion and actual reality, but we will instead seek a systematic description of the experience in which the action is embedded. Instead of getting as far as possible outside an individual's viewpoint, we will seek instead ever deeper entry into it. Our goal will be to provide a description of what the experience seemed to be about and what it was like to have had such an experience. In effect, we will seek to get so far into the viewpoints of others that we begin to appreciate just how their situations looked and felt to them. We will seek to recover

their psychological life, not annihilate it. So if, for example, we begin our inquiry into the behavior of the driver of the car from his viewpoint, and ask why he stopped the car so suddenly, we are likely to begin with the conjecture that he stopped because he was afraid to go on. The bulk of any subsequent inquiry would be given over to seeking a deeper and broader understanding of why the situation seemed so fearful when he slammed on his brakes. In other words, instead of focussing our inquiry on establishing the distance between illusion and reality, we will instead try to understand the connection between the experience and the behavior. We will want to know not why the driver was mistaken, but why he was afraid.

A causal account of a given behavior can be generated from within each perspective. Looking backward at the action in the parable, seeking an objective view from nowhere, we might conclude that the driver slammed on his brakes prematurely and unnecessarily hard because he was paying insufficient attention to the road, because his vision was obscured by foggy conditions, and so on. This would explain the observable behavior. But looking vicariously forward, seeking entry into the evolving psychological life of the driver as it was lived, we might conclude that he slammed on his brakes because he felt a wave of fear come over him in the presence of the frightening apparition which seemed to rise up before him in the road. It is important to recognize that causal accounts such as these do



not compete with each other, in the sense that one must be correct and the other mistaken. They are instead complementary; both may be correct. There was a tree in the road. There did seem at the moment of braking to be something much more menacing than a tree blocking the driver's path. He slammed on his brakes in a panic because of a mistaken perception. He slammed on his brakes in a panic because he was afraid of the apparition he saw before him.

Thus it is impossible to choose one account over the other on the basis of factuality or even the internal coherence of the explanations. For although they purport to explain the same action, the accounts appeal to different universes of facts: As viewed backward from nowhere or vicariously forward from somewhere. Yet one must choose. It is obviously impossible to begin a coherent inquiry from within both perspectives. But in acknowledging the necessity of choosing a place to begin from these complementary modes of psychological inquiry, we come to a fork in the methodological road which is absolutely basic. The choice of paths will bear fundamentally on the sort of endeavor the psychology of avoiding nuclear war is going to be and on the likelihood that it may eventually contribute to reducing the risk of a catastrophic nuclear war.

On what basis, then, should we choose? The conclusion of the parable provides the clue. Despite knowing, after the fact, that his panic was unwarranted, despite now believing that it was not a sinister apparition that he saw, despite having

concluded that it was only a dead tree in the road, the narrator confesses that a parting glimpse of the scene before his headlights makes him shudder all over again. With speed and glee unwarranted by the facts, he hurries away from the place. As he reenacts the original encounter, even with the facts fresh in his mind, his fearful, panicky reaction is recapitulated. One is inclined to predict, on this basis, that any future encounters of this sort will also evoke the same response pattern: Fear - Sudden Stop - Examination of the facts - Flight From the Scene - Backward Glance - Fear All Over Again. In other words, the knowledge that one has made an error and that an objective view of the situation yields the conclusion that one's fear and subsequent action were unwarranted by the facts, is often quite unlikely to alter one's perception and action the next time a similar situation is encountered. This of course should not be taken to mean that we are incapable of learning from our mistakes. We obviously are. But it does mean that in situations of surprise, uncertainty, potentially high stakes and thus of considerable fear, the fact of our past mistakenness will not be nearly as compelling as the fearful facts which appear to be emerging before us. Looking backward with certainty, we understand that we have often been mistaken in such situations. Looking forward uncertainly, and with a great deal apparently at stake, we cannot help feeling that this time our worst fears will be vindicated.



This has implications which should be immensely troubling to practitioners of the paradigmatic psychology of avoiding nuclear war - a group of approaches united in their enthusiasm for discovering errors in the decision-making of leaders with nuclear responsibilities. In this already large and rapidly expanding body of work, nuclear decision-makers are called irrational, mendacious, paranoid, close-minded, short-sighted, and many more psychologically-based epithets besides. But as I argue in what follows (and as I have argued at great length elsewhere), these attributions of mistakenness have failed to have any impact whatever on nuclear policy-making.<sup>3</sup> The reason is clear: The accounts emphasizing errors, or gaps between the illusions of policy-makers and the reality as determined by the psychologists, strike the policy-makers almost universally as psychologically unreal, as merely disguised attempts to demonstrate that, in fact, nuclear policy-makers know considerably less about avoiding nuclear war than do nuclear psychologists. Even former policy-makers, looking backward at their efforts to manage nuclear risks in a crisis, see nothing in the psychological accounts which seems to reflect an understanding of what they faced, and what their successors will face, in any future nuclear crisis. Thus, on the basis of policy-relevance, we should choose to begin our inquiry with a psychology which seeks entry into the forward moving psychological life of policy-makers. For whatever we may learn from such an endeavor, we stand a far greater chance of actually



communicating the lessons we learn to nuclear policy-makers. In that case, we psychologists will have learned to speak their language rather than (implausibly) requiring them to learn ours.

But there is, finally, a deeper reason for seeking to recover rather than to annihilate the evolving psychological life of nuclear policy-makers. It is this: Although fear can often lead to mistaken judgment, profoundly emotional reactions to situations are seldom wholly without foundation. Our mental life is, in a word, adaptive, as a rule. If we are very fearful, for example, there is often something present to be afraid of. As William James (following Darwin's lead) pointed out over a century ago, our emotional reactions are at the very core of our capacity to survive and it is not for nothing that our emotions are often so stubbornly resistant to cognitive control.<sup>4</sup> We evolved and survived as a species because we developed the ability to sense and avoid danger. In the chapters which follow, I will refer to a good deal of psychologically-based criticism of the managers of the missile crisis and of nuclear policy-makers generally. All of this criticism is predicated on the assumption that emotional reactions to nuclear danger are either unimportant or to be avoided. What we should seek, according to this view, is greater rationality.

But I disagree profoundly with this conclusion. This is hardly to say, however, that I believe "irrationality" is required to reduce nuclear risks. It does mean that such a

conclusion-improve the rationality of nuclear policy makers in such and such situations - derives from beginning the whole inquiry in the wrong place, seeking a view from nowhere. Once again, the key to the proper response is in the parable. "The dark and sinister shape was there before me on the road," the narrator recalls, "and the conduct of my foot proves it." Indeed it does. For although he was mistaken, as he later discovered, in his estimate of what was before him, he was absolutely correct to discern danger and thus to stop before colliding with whatever was in the road. Likewise, as I argue below, with the nuclear danger present in the missile crisis. The key participants may (or may not) have overestimated the degree of nuclear danger they were in. But the fact - the living psychological fact - that they feared they were in mortal danger of inadvertent nuclear catastrophe had everything to do with why they too slammed on their own brakes and sought a peaceful retreat from the dreadful apparition of major nuclear war which seemed to be rising before them. Thus, the more we discover about the way the look and feel of inadvertent nuclear danger evolved, the greater the likelihood, I argue, that we will eventually articulate a psychology which seems real to policy-makers, and the greater will be our understanding of the adaptive role of feared nuclear inadvertence in a nuclear crisis - the one we had in October, 1962 and the one we are presently trying to prevent. 7!



III. FEAR OF INADVERTENT NUCLEAR WAR: AN OUTLINE OF THE  
ARGUMENT

Man has a natural dread of walking in the dark...  
where all relative considerations (the lanterns which  
are normally a help to us) are quenched.

Kierkegaard, Journals, 1850-1854

By October 27, 1962 the Cuban missile crisis had ground on relentlessly in private and in public for almost two weeks. The American quarantine of the island of Cuba had been implemented after nearly a week of planning, but the construction work at the Soviet missile sites continued at a feverish pace. The United States armed forces were on world wide alert; over one-hundred thousand troops were poised to invade Cuba from bases in the southeastern U.S.; the Air Force was poised to bomb the four missile sites in Cuba, an act which would probably kill many Soviets working at the sites, as well as many Cubans. Later on this fateful Saturday, President Kennedy would send his brother Robert, the Attorney General, to meet with Soviet Ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin and to deliver a very dire message: "We had to have a commitment by tomorrow," Robert Kennedy later recalled telling Dobrynin, "that those bases would be removed. I was not giving them an ultimatum but a statement of fact. He should understand that if they did not remove those bases, we would remove them."<sup>1</sup> We should understand this message for what it was: A contingent declaration



of war against a Soviet-bloc state, a war in which many Cubans, Soviets and Americans would probably die. Never before or since in the age of nuclear missiles have the superpowers been anywhere near this close to major war. In late October, 1962 many American policy-makers believed they may have been twenty-four hours and one decision - Khrushchev's - away from it.

At 4:00 PM on October 27, the President's Executive Committee of the National Security Council met for the eighth time during the crisis. The concluding sections of Executive Secretary Bromley Smith's minutes of that meeting are overflowing with hints of fear and foreboding regarding the options that were being considered. Here are the concluding passages:

Secretary McNamara pointed out, in connection with the current military situation, that a limited airstrike on Cuba was now impossible because our reconnaissance planes were being fired on. He felt that we must now look to the major airstrike to be followed by an invasion of Cuba... Secretary McNamara [deleted]\*...felt that the Soviets would not attack Turkey when we invaded Cuba. Our objective should be to seek to avoid any Soviet attack in Europe as a response to our invasion of Cuba.

...

\* Hyp: if we removed IRBMs [or, warheads] from Turkey...

General [Maxwell] Taylor summarized the conclusions of the Joint Chiefs. Unless the missiles are defused immediately, the Chiefs recommended implementation on Monday. Secretary McNamara asked what we should do about air surveillance tomorrow. He stated his recommendation, i.e., if our reconnaissance planes are fired on, we will attack the attackers. General Taylor noted that in order to be ready to invade on Monday, we must continue intensive air surveillance.

? ...

General Taylor read a late report of the shooting down of the U-2 reconnaissance plane in Cuba which said that the wreckage was on the ground and that the pilot had been killed. He felt we should make an air attack tomorrow on the SAM [surface to air missile] site responsible for shooting down the U-2 plane.

? Secretary McNamara said that we must now be ready to attack Cuba [deleted]. Invasion had become almost inevitable. If we leave U.S. missiles in Turkey, the Soviets might attack Turkey. If the Soviets do attack the Turks, we must respond in the NATO area.<sup>2</sup>

It is often said that the missile crisis, while no doubt a serious affair, was not really different in any essential respects from many other Cold War crises or, for that matter, from international crises of the pre-nuclear era. One can, it is true, try to understand the episode in this way: By treating it as just another example of game-playing, bargaining, crisis



management techniques, and so on. But to do so appears to miss much of what was psychologically real to the key decision-makers in the crisis: The fear of inadvertent nuclear catastrophe. For a straightforward unpacking of Bromley Smith's minutes reveals a situation without precedent - a degree of the felt presence of inadvertent nuclear danger unapproached in the nuclear age.

Let us look briefly at these minutes and into the finer grain of what the President and his EXCOMM believed they were facing by the late afternoon of October 27, 1962. First, a massive airstrike was planned consisting of over 500 sorties aimed at the complete destruction of all four sites in Cuba at which the Soviet missiles were being hurriedly readied for use.<sup>3</sup> These airstrikes would unavoidably involve what is now commonly called extensive "collateral damage" to civilians, as well as the deaths of perhaps thousands of Cubans and Soviets working in and around the missile sites. We should not underestimate the moral apprehension with which the President and his advisors contemplated this step. Theirs was a generation which had learned to detest surprise attacks upon an unsuspecting adversary and the killing of non-combatants. This is precisely what the Japanese had done at Pearl Harbor and the Germans had done in Britain, Poland, the Soviet Union and elsewhere. Most of these men had served actively in World War II, a war fought to right the wrongs perpetrated by nations who practiced "sneak attack." Thus, to consider such an attack on Cuba, for whatever reason, was reprehensible to them. Many



EXCOMM members, led by Robert Kennedy and George Ball, had said so in their earlier deliberations.<sup>4</sup> Yet by the late afternoon of October 27, the surprise attack regarded by them with such deep ambivalence had become the heart and soul of their plan for eliminating the missiles, should Krushchev not agree immediately to remove them. Many felt they now had no other choice.<sup>5</sup>

Yet the moral fear - fear of violating deep-seated beliefs about what in this instance would constitute just and unjust warfare - was only the tip of the iceberg of fear that gripped the members of the EXCOMM. They also had to fear the expected results of launching a massive airstrike to destroy the missile sites, and an even more massive invasion to insure that no missiles had escaped destruction. Robert McNamara estimated that in any such invasion, the United States could expect fierce resistance from the Cubans, resulting in up to 25,000 American casualties.<sup>6</sup> In other words, the American government faced squarely the prospect of a "Cuban War" of massive proportions, possibly involving several hundred thousand American troops and something like half as many combat deaths as would ultimately be sustained by the United States in over a dozen years of fighting in Indo-China. This is what appeared to be required to, as Robert Kennedy put it pithily, "remove them" - to destroy the capacity of the Soviet Union to launch nuclear missiles from Cuba against the American homeland. The price in American lives would probably be very high indeed.

Yet even this fear - fear of the military consequences of initiating the "Cuban War" - paled to virtual insignificance when compared with the nascent, hovering, almost palpable fear that any Cuban war might escalate inadvertently to a major nuclear war. As we may note by reading between many of the lines in Bromley Smith's minutes, the policy-makers imagined two ways in which this might happen. First, most directly and thus very probably most forcefully, it was possible that the Soviet missiles in Cuba were fully operational, that their nuclear warheads were in place or close by, and that simply from panic or in fulfilment of duty, one or more of these missiles would be launched under warning of attack, or under actual attack from American aircraft. We must try to keep in mind what, in the lexicon of contemporary nuclear strategy, was being contemplated: A preemptive strike using conventional forces against the nuclear forces of another superpower. There exists a good deal of sensible theoretical literature concerning nuclear crises which holds that just such a moment - when war seems virtually inevitable (as McNamara held that it was, in the EXCOMM minutes) and when a definite advantage is seen to accrue to the party striking first - that holds the gravest nuclear danger imaginable.<sup>7</sup> In plain terms they were contemplating a first strike against Soviet nuclear forces, a contingent intention they had made known to the Soviets in Robert Kennedy's message to Dobrynin.



A more unstable and dangerous situation can scarcely be imagined. There was simply no way to be sure ahead of time whether a Soviet launch officer in Cuba might feel it was his duty to launch the nuclear missile under his command, thus initiating a nuclear war against the United States and requiring, according to American war plans, a massive nuclear retaliatory attack upon the Soviet Union. This is precisely what President Kennedy had told the American people on October 22, when he announced in a nationally televised speech that offensive missiles had been discovered in Cuba and that a naval quarantine had been constructed to force the Soviets to remove them. "It shall be the policy of this nation," he said, "regard any missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union."<sup>8</sup> Thus if we had attacked the missile sites, and if a Soviet missile was inadvertently launched, the likelihood was very great that we would straightaway find ourselves in the midst of a major nuclear war - a holocaust.

Second, less direct but just as ominous as the possible inadvertent launch under attack of Soviet nuclear forces in Cuba, the members of the EXCOMM feared what we now call "horizontal escalation" by the Soviets. They were particularly concerned about whether the Soviets might attempt (what appeared to them to be) a calibrated, equal response to the attack on Cuba, by bombing the NATO missiles sites nearest their own



border in Turkey. But if they did so or if (as many members of the EXCOMM suspected) they initiated their own "quarantine" by closing off West Berlin, the United States <sup>"must"</sup>, in either of those cases (as McNamara says telegraphically at the end of Bromley Smith's minutes) "respond in the NATO area." But embedded in this opaque reference to Western nuclear strategy was the very high probability of a subsequent clash of U.S. and Soviet-led conventional forces in Europe, a quick victory for the vastly superior Soviet forces, NATO's initiation of nuclear war, followed by a major nuclear war in which most of Europe, much of the Soviet Union and a good deal of the United States would be destroyed.

US!  
"misadventure"?

So there sat that small group of men on the Autumn afternoon of October 27, 1962. They were trying to think their way out of the nuclear vise in which they felt increasingly squeezed. Richard Neustadt is no doubt correct to assert that anyone sufficiently in touch with the deep feelings of the American people in 1962 to be within reach of the Presidency would also have understood that the Soviet missiles in Cuba had to be removed. President Kennedy believed he would have been impeached if he had not forced their removal. He was probably correct.<sup>9</sup> The quarantine was chosen in the hope that its minimal application of force would induce the Soviets to remove them. But it had not worked. Now SAM missiles were being fired at unarmed high-altitude U.S. reconnaissance planes. Cuban forces, moreover, were directing anti-aircraft fire at all

?

low-flying reconnaissance aircraft.<sup>10</sup> An American pilot, the same Rudolf Anderson who had taken the first photographs of the offensive missile sites in Cuba, was now dead. The American military clamored for retaliation. More American pilots would probably soon die from groundfire. The quarantine was becoming unwieldy and difficult to manage.<sup>11</sup> The missile sites, meanwhile, neared completion. Thus, the need to attack and to mount an invasion seemed, as McNamara said, "almost inevitable." It should occur perhaps as early as the next day, or the day after at the latest. And at the end of the path on which they would embark with an airstrike and an invasion, many members of the President's EXCOMM saw moral opprobrium heaped upon themselves (not least of all by themselves), they saw the possibility of thousands of American servicemen killed in Cuba and they saw, as a very live possibility, the ensuing conflict escalating either directly or indirectly into a nuclear holocaust desired by no one and feared by all. In 1968, Robert McNamara wrote that those moments were filled, in his view, with "the greatest danger of a catastrophic war since the advent of the nuclear age."<sup>12</sup> That statement is still emphatically correct.

During the Cuban missile crisis, the look and feel of nuclear danger must have become, at times, almost visceral in its intensity. In (what turned out to be) the conclusion to the crisis, feelings of vulnerability, responsibility and a sense that control was slipping away became pervasive. Indeed, it has been reported that by the end of the crisis, at least two



who? (Kilpatrick?)

-32-

members of the EXCOMM had become so debilitated that others had to assume their duties. So great was the apparition of nuclear war they faced, so intense was the process of trying to manage it, that some may simply have ceased to function as decision-makers.<sup>13</sup> Yet despite the intense stress and strain, leaders in the U.S. and Soviet Union managed, against all the odds they believed they faced, to construct a resolution to the conflict that involved no air attack on Cuba, no invasion of the island, and thus no need for Soviet retaliation. These men, some operating at very nearly the end of their reserves of energy and resourcefulness, crafted a solution acceptable to both sides. In one of the unexpected peculiarities of the nuclear age, the death of a single American pilot in a moment of very deep crisis seems to have become the catalyst not, as one might have predicted, for retaliation and war, but rather for resolution and peace. Robert Kennedy said that the news of Major Rudolf Anderson's death on the morning of October 27, 1962 would "change the whole course of events and alter history."<sup>14</sup> One of the central contentions of this essay is that Robert Kennedy's startling claim, far from being merely hyperbolic remembrance, is essentially correct. If we are thus to understand the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis and the nuclear peace since 1962, then we will have to understand the psychological conditions which prevailed in both the American and Soviet leaderships, conditions which led quickly to nuclear peace rather than to nuclear war.



Interpreters of the missile crisis who were close to the President and his advisors - who were, in fact, in close touch with them during and after the crisis - have said straight - forwardly that the missile crisis must be distinguished from other crises because of the object and extent of the fear it generated at the highest levels of government. The fear was of inadvertent nuclear war, a war which would be arrived at by human decision-making that is so constrained by the perverse crisis situation that nuclear war would seem to be the only option left open. Moreover, this fear - fear of walking through the fog of crisis like a sleepwalker stumbling through the dark into catastrophe - was powerfully felt. Historian Arthur Schlesinger, who served on the White House staff during the missile crisis, makes the point unmistakably:

As for Kennedy, he had thought the odds on war, according to [Theodore Sorensen], "between one out of three and even." McNamara, recalling the magnificent sunset over the Potomac on Saturday evening, October 27, said later he wondered how many more sunsets he was destined to see. Did these highly intelligent men really believe we were on the edge of catastrophe?... I would say: One lobe of the brain had to recognize the ghastly possibility, another found it quite inconceivable...Kennedy's grim odds were based on fear,

not of Khrushchev's intention, but of human error, of something going terribly wrong down the line...

[because] even with the justified assumption of reciprocal rationality a terrible risk remained.<sup>15</sup>

Richard E. Neustadt, a political scientist and also a close associate of President Kennedy and his key advisors, put the same point this way in testimony to congress given shortly after the missile crisis:

...last October we all glimpsed the new dimension in President's risk-taking...the...President lives with the knowledge that at any time he, personally, may have to make a human judgment - or may fail to control someone else's judgment - which puts half the world in jeopardy and cannot be called back. You and I will recognize his burden intellectually; he actually experienced it emotionally.<sup>16</sup>

To those observers who were close to the key American decision-makers during the missile crisis, these were the decisive psychological facts which distinguished it - what the great fear was about and what it must have been like to face such a situation, face-to-face with what must have seemed like unprecedentedly fateful responsibilities. They feared the unintended consequences of their actions and those of the Soviets and, because of the potentially catastrophic dimensions of those consequences, and also because the likelihood of



catastrophe appeared to be rising hour-by-hour, the fear was very great indeed. As Schlesinger and Neustadt point out, the fear of nuclear inadvertence was controlling and ultimately decisive. Moreover - and this subject will occupy a great deal of this essay - the fear was adaptive. Later I will try to suggest how and why this must be so.

What follows in this essay is also based upon the following premises: That this central decisive psychological fact of the missile crisis - fear of nuclear inadvertence - has remarkably and regrettably been almost completely forgotten by specialists who study and construct nuclear policy; that this pervasive amnesia regarding the salient psychological facts of the missile crisis has become deeply institutionalized within the community of nuclear policy analysts and policy-makers; that this ignorance of the psychological evolution during the missile crisis has not been remediated by the recent influx into nuclear policy commentary of many psychologists and psychologically informed political scientists; and finally, that the inability of the vast majority of students of nuclear questions to understand that feared nuclear inadvertence lay at the psychological core of the resolution of the missile crisis has ramifications which reach far beyond merely setting the record straight about why leaders behaved as they did during the missile crisis. Indeed, this paradigmatic misinterpretation of the missile crisis has led, as I argue at the end of the essay, directly to a wide variety of misunderstandings about the



requirememnts for nuclear deterrence and the prospects and problems associated with nuclear crisis management. These are controversial assertions, to be sure, but I am convinced that they are essentially correct. They sum to this: We do not properly understand why the missile crisis was resolved as it was, and therefore we tend often utterly to misconstrue how to prevent and manage nuclear crises now and in the foreseeable future. Much of the remainder of this essay represents an attempt to demonstrate the validity of these harsh judgments.

This is not the place for a lengthy disquisition on the origin and development of learned nuclear <sup>?</sup>amnesia regarding feared nuclear inadvertence in the missile crisis. But just to orient the reader to a bit of the background of this essay, here in outline is my view of what has gone wrong. As is evident in the remarks by Schlesinger and Neustadt, and indeed as is implicit in Bromley Smith's EXCOMM minutes of meeting number 8 on October 27 and explicit in many memoirs and interviews of the key participants, the missile crisis was widely regarded during its duration and immediate aftermath as sui generis, as a unique (and uniquely fearful) event. And as we have already seen, this was also the view of most of the media at the time. It appears that most people at the time - at least those in America and the other Western democracies - really believed that the world as they knew it was about to be destroyed. Thus it is hardly an accident that millions of people apparently felt deep resonance with a very popular song written by Bob Dylan during the missile

crisis: "A Hard Rain's-a-gonna Fall."<sup>17</sup> The "rain", it was clear enough, was a "rain" of Soviet missiles arriving from Cuba, a "rain", no one really desired but - so it appeared to Bob Dylan and millions of others during the missile crisis - a "rain" that might fall anyway as events appeared to be racing beyond human control. *but*

But almost immediately after its conclusion, analysts moved in to interpret the event - to make sense of it, to compare it, contrast it and reduce it to what they regarded as its essential elements. In itself, this process was both inevitable and unobjectionable. We obviously can come to understand a novel occurrence only in relation to what has gone on before. But importantly, many of the most influential interpreters of the missile crisis were powerfully influenced by economics and by a concomitant tendency to emphasize abstract, grand theorizing about human behavior in situations of deterrence. The psychology to which they subscribed was (and for many analysts remains) a "rational actor" psychology. Human behavior, according to this view, is accounted for within a framework which holds that people weigh the costs and benefits to be gained from a certain action and act accordingly, seeking to maximize their gains and minimize their losses. This is "rational" behavior. Both fear and inadvertence comport very uneasily with rational actor psychology in the form in which it is customarily applied to nuclear policy, which requires rational actors to assess the military balance of forces and to

*It was rational to fear "inadvertence"  
(more realistic than they knew/found!)*



decide whether to attack, bluff or fold on the basis of relative gains calculated to be derivable from these actions. Moreover, fear of inadvertence, which is herein taken to be the linchpin of the resolution of the missile crisis and of nuclear deterrence generally, is practically incommensurate with the precepts of rational actor psychology. It is obviously very difficult to attribute rationality in such instances of intense preoccupation with the catastrophic implications of "Murphy's Law," and this indeed led many analysts to, in effect, invent another kind of missile crisis, one effectively drained of the mortifying fear of inadvertence which seemed to most of the key participants and their close associates to have been the psychological engine driving the evolution and eventual resolution of the episode. No

One may observe this tendency toward theory-driven and psychologically unwarranted rationalization, for example, in one of the first comprehensive attempts to understand the implications of the missile crisis for American nuclear policy: that of Albert and Roberta Wohlstetter's influential Adelphi Paper, "Controlling the Risks in Cuba," published in April, 1965.<sup>18</sup> One finds in this analysis considerable disbelief that President Kennedy and his advisors could have been so fearful and that they thought war, perhaps even nuclear war, so probable as to justify remarks like the President's assertion that on the final weekend of the crisis, the odds of war between the superpowers were "between one out of three and even," with



all the catastrophic implications of what Schlesinger called "Kennedy's grim odds." Here is how the Wohlstetters responded to such assertions:

Some of President Kennedy's statements in the crisis and after may have overstated the likelihood of a nuclear exchange. He was appropriately anxious to express the gravity of his concern about such a catastrophe...though control was evident in every one of his moves, President Kennedy's statements did not stress in words that he was in control. It has therefore been possible to misconstrue just what were the risks in the crisis. The matter is of great importance.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, it is important. We must keep in mind what the President actually said, many times, about feared inadvertence. For example, in his letter to khrushchev of October 28, the day of the breakthrough and resolution of the acute phase of the crisis, the President said:

I am replying at once to your broadcast message of October twenty-eight, even though the official text has not yet reached me, because of the great importance I attach to moving forward promptly to the settlement of the Cuban crisis. I think that you and I, with our heavy responsibilities for the maintenance of peace, were aware that developments were approaching a point where events could have become unmanageable.<sup>20</sup>

In the Wohlstetters' view of the matter, only two general conclusions are justified about the sentiments conveyed in the President's letter: Either the President and his closest associates purposely exaggerated the risk for their own ends - they lied! -or they were simply mistaken.

In fact, the Wohlstetters' lead us to believe in their seminal analysis that the Kennedy Administration was, somewhat paradoxically, both deceitful and misguided. The central policy conclusion which they draw from their analysis is quite remarkable, in that it demonstrates clearly how totally the Wohlstetters had already, by April, 1965, expunged both fear and inadvertence from what was to become a standard analytical account of the resolution of the missile crisis. "Threats of uncontrollability," they conclude, "should be administered by prescription, against special dangers, and in small doses. Its use except in extremis is not compatible with a reputation for being both sane and meaning what one says."<sup>21</sup> In other words, contrary to what the President said, and contrary to what was reported by most of his closest aides, there was during the missile crisis no appreciable fear of nuclear inadvertence, only the threat of uncontrollability. The Wohlstetters claim, in effect, that the President and his men, in complete control of the situation throughout the missile crisis, successfully deceived Khrushchev by "threatening" to lose control of the situation and allowing it to spiral into a nuclear holocaust. They argue further that Khrushchev, for his part, had to back

well...



down because he was faced with the prospect of an "encounter where the United States had both the capability to dominate in a conventional conflict and also to inflict overwhelming nuclear damage."<sup>22</sup> So, the President, possessing clearly the best hand in this nuclear poker game, forced Khrushchev to fold his relatively weak hand. The implication is that this is true whether or not the President and his advisors actually believed they were playing nuclear poker. More recently, Glenn Snyder and Paul Diesing, whose work on international crises is widely regarded as among the best in the field, no longer even refer to fear of inadvertent nuclear war as a supposed factor in the outcome of the crisis. They simply take it for granted that the missile crisis, along with several other crises, should be lumped together under the rubric "called bluff."<sup>23</sup> It seems that the further we move temporally from October, 1962, and from accounts by participants, newsmen, artists and common citizens who lived through it, the more game-like, abstract, emotion-less and ordinary the missile crisis has seemed to become.<sup>24</sup> It is now commonly regarded by students of nuclear policy as just another example of a superpower game, one with a peculiarly happy outcome in which the players managed to avoid a failure of deterrence.

As often happens in other contexts, the supposed "cure" for the unwarranted imposition of control and rational calculation onto a situation governed by evolving fear of inadvertent nuclear war has proven to be almost as unhelpful and



false as the "disease" which spawned it. In place of the rational actors invented by analysts in the paradigmatic tradition of the Wohlstetters, a new generation of revisionists has begun to invent irrational actors. These hapless creations cave into stress, take unnecessary risks and often <sup>well?</sup> lead their nations into disastrous wars. Like the rational-actor psychologists they seek to supplant, advocates of irrational actor psychology regard rationality as the key to good crisis management and the missile crisis as a typical international crisis, explicable in the same terms as other international crises. These revisionists differ from their mentors chiefly in admitting that fear has a role to play. They believe it necessarily degrades the quality of judgment and decision-making. For evidence, they turn generally to non-nuclear cases in which deterrence in fact failed so that, it is argued, one can see in detail how fear of attack leads to stress, aggression and ultimately to disaster.<sup>25</sup> They then argue by analogy to the nuclear case, assuming that in some future, deep superpower crisis, the level of stress will be, so to speak, psychologically commensurate with the imagined effects of a major nuclear war, and that this may well lead with unprecedented speed and profundity to a nuclear holocaust.<sup>26</sup>

As I argue at length in the chapters which follow, the irrational actor psychologists are right to emphasize fear in a nuclear crisis, but they are wrong to insist that the effects of fear must be debilitating. The resolution of the missile crisis

? or "may" ? "probably"

or lead to that, constant, aggression ?

yes!

simply refutes this claim. Dererrence in that instance did not fail. Psychopathology did not lead to poor decision-making. In short, the missile crisis cannot be explained by super-imposing either rational or irrational actors on the events. Rational actor psychologists must assume either that the policy-makers were liars or the victims of illusion. I say they must assume these things, because it is just not possible to prove them without appealing to a visiciously circular argument which assumes the rationalistic propositions one needs to demonstrate independently. Irrational actor psychologists, on the other hand, must assume that the leaders of the superpowers in the missile crisis were just astonishingly lucky.<sup>x</sup> They escaped without a holocaust for no good reason at all. But neither kind of account explains what actually seems to have happened psychologically during the missile crisis. Neither has a place anywhere in its often complex theoretical finery for fear of nuclear inadvertence and for the sober, ultimately adaptive states of mind it seems to have forced upon all the leaders in the missile crisis.

What I believe we have witnessed in the evolution of interpretation of the missile crisis, and of its relation to nuclear policy, is an almost total victory of pre-conceived, abstract theories of human behavior over the recalcitrant reality of concrete psychological facts. Participants in the crisis at the highest levels, those who knew them well, and ordinary citizens all emphasize the central significance in the



crisis of fear - very profound fear at the end of the ordeal - of nuclear inadvertence. All these interpreters of the crisis, lacking commitment to some favored rational or irrational actor psychology, find the centrality of feared nuclear inadvertence to be self-evident. It is thus difficult to escape the impression that we are once again witnesses to the phenomenon that William James years ago called "the same old story...

concepts, first employed to make things intelligible, are clung to even when they make them unintelligible."<sup>27</sup> To the vast majority of analysts, I believe, the missile crisis becomes intelligible only if the psychological experience of the participants is cast aside as either mistaken or epiphenomenal, implying of course that the explanations of psychologically-informed analysts of rationalist and irrationalist persuasions are to be preferred over the accounts of the actual managers of the missile crisis, which are informed not mainly by psychological theory but by the memory of a fear they will never forget. *Consistent with irrationality: on US side (not SU!)*

Why, after all, does this remarkable, theory-driven nuclear amnesia, this jettisoning of the salience of feared nuclear inadvertence from explanations of the missile crisis, really matter? Because of this: Almost the entire debate over the meaning of the missile crisis and over the requirements for nuclear deterrence in calmer times has occurred along the dimension of rationality-irrationality. There are exceptions, most notably the recent attempts made by a group of Harvard



analysts to articulate "owliness", a factor believed to be distinct from hawkishness and dovishness, and which emphasizes concern over inadvertence.<sup>28</sup> Because of the hegemonic appeal of the pursuit of rationality in nuclear policy, few people directly concerned now with articulating nuclear policy sufficiently appreciate the absolutely central role fear of inadvertence has played in deterring nuclear war - in the missile crisis and since 1962. As I argue in the final chapter, many radical proposals for fundamentally altering the present situation - that of mutual assured destruction (MAD), the same situation President Kennedy and his associates believed they faced - assume that the present situation is in same deep sense "irrational" and therefore unlikely to keep the nuclear peace in the long run. But because these utopian critics do not understand the central role of feared nuclear inadvertence - its ambiguity and its power-many of them are now enthusiastic about "getting beyond deterrence." For example, Albert Wohlstetter has recently written that he considers it his solemn duty to

counter...the perverse dogma which, after the Cuban missile crisis, came increasingly to be used by Western statesmen...: That the West should rely for deterring the Soviets on the ability to answer a nuclear military attack by assuming the deliberate destruction of tens, or even hundreds of millions of Soviet citizens.<sup>29</sup>

not McN, Budy

Similar statements, from all across the spectrum of opinion on nuclear policy, are now commonplace.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, it must be the passion for transcending deterrence as we now know it which has sustained enthusiasm for President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, even though it is widely regarded as technically infeasible, to say the least. The argument advanced herein is that Wohlstetter and the many other policy analysts under the implicit sway of rational and irrational actor psychologies of avoiding nuclear war are the ones who cling to perverse dogma, and who have perverted the psychological facts of the missile crisis and of deterrence. If we instead take William James's sensible advice to "turn our backs on our winged concepts altogether and busy ourselves in the thickness of those passing moments over which they fly," we will, I believe, be drawn immediately to the palpable, obvious and central role of feared nuclear inadvertence in the resolution of the missile crisis and in keeping the nuclear peace since 1962.<sup>31</sup> Most significantly, if we turn our backs on the concepts inherent in the elaborate rational/irrational actor psychologies, and toward a vicarious face-to-face encounter with the psychological reality of leaders in October, 1962, we will better appreciate that MAD, far from being someone's invention, dogma or folly, in fact evolved naturally, if painfully, out of the accurately-grasped nuclear reality of 1962. Since this (MAD) reality

remains intact, the interpretation of the missile crisis becomes, in the nature of things, the key to our understanding of the requirements of deterrence.



IV. RATIONAL/IRRATIONAL ACTOR PSYCHOLOGIES: THE PUZZLE AND  
PROBABILITY OF INADVERTENT NUCLEAR WAR.

*see Hardin*

✓

He thinks he is in control of possibility;  
he thinks that when he has decoyed this  
prodigious elasticity into the field of  
probability...he holds it prisoner; he carries  
possibility around like a prisoner in the cage of  
the probable.

Kierkegaard, The Sickness Unto  
Death, 1848

The objective tendency, which proposes to make  
everyone an observer, and in its maximum to  
transform him into so objective an observer that  
he becomes almost a ghost...refuses to know or  
listen to anything except what stands in relation  
to itself.

Kierkegaard, Concluding  
Unscientific Postscript,  
1846

If we are to avoid a nuclear war in the long run, while  
the United States and Soviet Union continue to coexist under a  
condition of mutual nuclear deterrence, then our most important  
task will be to prevent a situation from arising in which the  
leaders of these countries forget, or "unlearn," the central  
lesson of the nuclear age since the Cuban missile crisis of  
1962. The lesson is simply stated: Nuclear war must be  
avoided. Period. All Presidents since John Kennedy have  
learned this, though none in quite so dramatic a fashion as he  
had to learn it, over Laos and Berlin in 1961, and particularly  
the following year over Soviet missiles in Cuba.

Recently, the nuclear learning of President Reagan was particularly dramatic. As a private citizen and as a newly-elected President, he was given to vague but often exceedingly bellicose threats to best the Soviets in a nuclear war, if it came to that. But after having served for a while, and after having gotten more fully acquainted with the risks and consequences of a nuclear war with the Soviets, he became and remains convinced that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought."<sup>1</sup> This phrase then took on bilateral significance by its having been included in the joint communique issuing from the 1985 meeting in Geneva between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev. This is only some of the most recent evidence that both superpowers have learned, as Thomas Schelling said many years ago, to transform the nuclear balance of terror into a "balance of prudence."<sup>2</sup> Pro-nuclear war factions do not exist. Neither does the prospect of leaders who are anxious to begin a nuclear war. These facts reflect a quite remarkable evolution in thinking about nuclear weapons and nuclear war. Without a single nuclear weapon being fired in anger since World War II, and thus by means of fearful thought experiments alone, the leaders and citizens of the nuclear superpowers have learned to abhor the prospect of any sort of nuclear war.<sup>3</sup> No

But does abhorrence necessarily translate into avoidance? Few would argue that it does, although opinions regarding the likelihood of a nuclear war differ widely, from the nearly



panicky to the quite complacent. No serious student of nuclear risk, however, rates the probability of nuclear war at zero. For those of us who worry about how to avoid a nuclear war we have already learned to abhor, the concern lay with two factors: First, a non-zero probability of an event with a potentially catastrophic outcome; and second, our belief that in certain situations - we usually call them crises - the probability of a nuclear war might rise alarmingly high. We are by now used to reading, writing and believing that such an abhorred, but paradoxically initiated nuclear war would occur by means of inadvertence: Some not quite fully imagined, insidious concatenation of technology, psychology and politics which results in a situation that is so relentlessly perverse, so apparently devoid of satisfactory options, that nuclear war is actually initiated. When we speak, therefore, of the task of avoiding nuclear war nowadays, we generally mean avoiding inadvertent nuclear war.

Thus a great strain is inevitably placed upon the imaginations of students of paths to inadvertent nuclear war, and upon the credibility of their enterprise. In certain respects, the task of avoiding nuclear war is somewhat akin to avoiding earthquakes or falling meteorites. Everyone wants to do it. But no one really knows how, other than to specify in unreassuring probabilistic ways the conditions under which the likelihood of their occurrence may rise or fall. Schelling has recently proposed an even more apt metaphor, which brings the



discussion of avoiding disaster around to some of the basic principles of deterrence. Our learning to abhor and to avoid a nuclear war, according to Schelling, are very nearly functionally equivalent to one another. As Schelling argues:

People regularly stand at the curb watching trucks, buses and cars hurtle past at speeds that guarantee injury and threaten death if they so much as attempt to cross against the traffic. They are absolutely deterred. But there is no fear. They just know better.<sup>4</sup>

*Person Self:  
We are playing  
in the street...*

Because he believes we "know better" than to enter into a nuclear war, it is difficult for Schelling to imagine a situation in which this salient knowledge would be forgotten or superseded. Having once worked with Stanley Kubrick on the planning of the film that eventually became "Dr. Strangelove," Schelling believes the film turned out to be an absurdist comedy for precisely this reason: No one involved in conceiving it could imagine it as a believable tragedy.<sup>5</sup> That is why the inadvertence in Dr. Strangelove became a function of certifiable lunacy among all the major characters in the film. Thus, while one may find "Dr. Strangelove" entertaining as, say, "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" is entertaining, "Strangelove" lacks "Cuckoo's" credibility and impact because most of us do not believe that the highest levels of nuclear policy-making are anything like analogous to the insane goings-on in "Strangelove."

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We should notice the psychology of avoiding nuclear war which underlies Schelling's difficulty in imagining inadvertent nuclear war as a live possibility. For many of the most influential students of nuclear risk have had the same difficulty, and for the same reason. The reason is this: The psychology - the cluster of assumptions, concepts and data used to interpret aspects of mental life deemed relevant to nuclear risk - is not derived from common sense psychology, or from academic scientific or clinical psychology, but rather from economics. This made perfectly good sense in the late 1950s when Schelling, the Wohlstetters and a number of other nuclear strategists made their first seminal contributions.<sup>6</sup> The great fear in that dawning of the missile age was a nuclear surprise attack - a "bolt out of the blue." The task of Schelling and the others was to spell out the conditions under which rational individuals, continually calculating the ratio of costs and benefits to be derived from initiating a nuclear war, might actually arrive at a decision to do it. This was the imagined mental event of interest par excellence and the contributions of Schelling and his colleagues no doubt played a significant role in deterring nuclear war, in part by revolutionizing what he called in 1960 "the retarded science of international strategy."<sup>7</sup>

(NO



This psychology has proved to be very durable. It remains, in fact, the ostensible (though, as Schelling has recently pointed out, quite inconsistently applied) psychological basis for our arms control policies and for strategies for deterring nuclear war.<sup>8</sup> The concrete result of applying this economics - derived rational actor psychology to nuclear strategy and arms control has been to render demonstrably irrational the initiation of a nuclear war by either superpower against the other. This is what we have learned. And to the extent that we believe in the salience, ubiquity and power of human rationality, inadvertent nuclear war may to that extent seem almost like a contradiction in terms or, at most, a very remote possibility, and avoiding it as easy and predictable as not stepping in front of a speeding bus. In fact, continued deterrence of nuclear war is fully deducible from the rational actor psychology, together with the presence of mutually redundant, survivable strategic nuclear forces. Under these conditions, the initiation of a nuclear war is very probably tantamount to committing irrational suicide. Thus according to this view, leaders just won't do it. They will just "know better." *excerpt...*

By seeming to many people to have radically raised the risk of nuclear war during his first term in office, President Reagan by his bellicose anti-Sovietism inadvertently brought an end to the virtual hegemony of the rational actor psychology of avoiding nuclear war. Of course, there had been movement in



this direction for years within the strategic and nuclear policy communities. Most notably, Graham Allison and John Steinbruner had a decade or so earlier begun to amend the rational actor "model" in important ways, especially by noting how rationality is constrained by the standard operating procedures of large bureaucracies.<sup>9</sup> Steinbruner was especially concerned about inadvertent nuclear war deriving from a process analogous to that which he believed produced World War I: "An unintended and unexpected consequence of a limited strategic maneuver."<sup>10</sup>

But with the great nuclear fear which swept through the Western democracies in the early 1980s, this trickle of de-rationalization and attention to nuclear inadvertence became a flood. Importantly, as professional psychologists and psychiatrists began to enter the nuclear debate in large numbers, and as their views found their way into the arguments of non-psychologists, the ensuing discussion became increasingly strident and radically divergent from the rational actor psychology and the policies for which it seemed to provide justification.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike students of nuclear policy who came to an interest in this subject from economics, game-theory or political science, the new psychological radicals tended greatly to minimize the role of rationality - in planning, deployment, strategy and, most of all, in crises. As a result, inadvertent nuclear war, which had therefore been regarded by most of the people who thought about it at all as distinctly improbable, came increasingly to be regarded as, under certain (likely)

conditions, almost a sure thing. As the hypothetical irrational actor came in some quarters to replace the hypothetical rational actor, inadvertent nuclear war suddenly seemed far from mysterious and improbable. The wonder, according to irrational actor psychologists, was that one had not already occurred.

This new psychology of avoiding nuclear war has focussed almost exclusively on inadvertence: On some hypothesized process by which the mechanisms of deterrence become inverted and thus the cause of, rather than the antidote to, nuclear war. There are three more or less canonical paths along which this event is imagined to occur. The first, and least plausible, is by what we may call (following Murray Sayle) a conspiracy of circumstance.<sup>12</sup> Roughly speaking, this is the argument that "Murphy's Law" is the guiding principle of international affairs, that accidents are "bound" to happen, and that sooner or later any system as complex as that which buttresses mutual nuclear deterrence simply must fail.<sup>13</sup> Advocates of this view often use as analogies to an imagined inadvertent nuclear war the Soviet shootdown of Korean Air Lines 007 in September, 1983 or, less plausibly, the nuclear accidents at Three-Mile Island and Chernobyl. The argument is simple and, to some, compelling: Systems break down; nuclear deterrence is a system; deterrence will break down. Thus, this particular approach may be thought of almost as an a-rational, anti-psychology, according to which the relative rationality of actors is not nearly as controlling as the law of large



numbers. Sooner or later, it is believed, if the wheel of fortune is spun often enough it will come up with any number, including those as improbable as that "representing" a major nuclear war. When this occurs, it will simply have been mainly a case of fallible matter triumphing over unwitting, unintending minds.

A second variant of the irrational actor psychology of avoiding nuclear war may be called war by a conspiracy of crazies or craziness. A substantial number of anti-nuclear radicals apparently believe that the leaders of the superpowers are, in fact, crazy and desirous of provoking a nuclear war. Helen Caldicott, for example, has put forth an elaborate argument to demonstrate that President Reagan and Defense Secretary Weinberger are paranoid psychotics.<sup>14</sup> And she is far from alone in holding this view; it is quite popular among psychiatrists and clinical psychologists. Thus, according to advocates of this view, the most likely sort of nuclear war will occur inadvertently, only in regard to the wishes of the vast majority of humanity, but hardly contrary to the wishes of our sick leaders, many of whom are believed to crave the chance to fight one. In this way, a Strangelovian scenario will actually unfold, as life imitates art in the most catastrophic fashion imaginable.

*no page ref!*  
*will...*  
*threat!*

A more sophisticated version of this general approach holds that systemic craziness, not deranged leaders, will bring about an inadvertent nuclear war. Surprising as it may seem to



many non-psychologists, this view has become virtually paradigmatic in the American psychological establishment. Morton Deutsch, a distinguished social psychologist, calls the process leading to nuclear war the "malignant superpower relationship."<sup>15</sup> The central idea is this: The villain is the arms race which, because it requires one to "demonize" the enemy, leads to a phenomenon called by psychoanalyst Erik Erikson "pseudo-speciation" - the belief that a national adversary is composed, after all, of sub-human devils. Erikson sees powerful parallels between the pseudo-speciation of the Jews in Nazi Germany and what he takes to be the advanced stages of the same process occurring presently between the United States and the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup> When this process runs its course, according to believers in malignant, systemic superpower craziness, it is easy to imagine war breaking out between the superpowers, leading ultimately to nuclear war and planetary catastrophe. The slightest spark could provide the impetus because both sides would have become caught up in a crazy process of threat and counter-threat whose natural terminus is a war to eliminate an enemy who is by then regarded as both subhuman and very dangerous. In this kind of scenario, a nuclear war occurs in spite of the relevant leaders having full knowledge of its consequences because of the irresistible evolution of enmity that derives from the crazy social process in which both sides are trapped.

well?

None of these conspiratorial theories of nuclear inadvertence are given much credence by strategists or even by political scientists. Indeed, many of the best-known advocates of these views are almost unknown outside of that subset of psychologists which concerns itself with nuclear matters. Yet there is a third conspiratorial view which, in its various formulations, has begun to find a wide audience among more traditional sorts of students of nuclear risk. Advocates of this view believe an inadvertent nuclear war is likely to begin because of what may be called a conspiracy of circumstantial craziness. The psychology informing this approach is focussed centrally on situation-specific lapses in the rationality of decision-makers under the stress of trying to manage deep and dangerous crises. These scholars worry about such decision-making pathologies is defensive avoidance, "groupthink" cognitive closure, selective attention and the many other ways in which the quality of foreign policy decision-making can be degraded under the stress of crises. In a recent important book, Richard Ned Lebow has illustrated the ways in which crisis-induced stress may have been causally connected to radical lapses in the powers of perception and reason in the leaders of Great Britain and Argentina in the 1983 Falklands/Malvinas War. In the same book, Janice Stein has put forth an analogous argument in regard to the two most recent Middle East wars.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the Harvard Project on Avoiding Nuclear War recently identified crises and crisis-induced



degradation of rationality as important but imperfectly understood factors which may contribute to raised risk of nuclear war. They have begun to suggest measures for combatting what they call "Model II Factors" - breakdowns of rationality in crises, or of the belief in mutually ubiquitous rationality, which may lead to the initiation of a nuclear war which, at the outbreak of the crisis, was undesired by all parties to the conflict.<sup>19</sup> For all these students of nuclear risk, crises are the enemy because under conditions of high risk, high stakes and apparent shortage of time to decide, leaders may do (and have often done) what looks in retrospect like very crazy things.<sup>20</sup> They may even, as Richard Betts has argued, conclude for some reason that nuclear war is inevitable, or that it has already begun, and on this basis launch a nuclear attack that, under ordinary (non-crisis) conditions, would have been inconceivable to them.<sup>21</sup>

Recall the Peace Corps couple serving in Thailand during the Cuban missile crisis. They feared New York had already been destroyed. Advocates of a psychology of avoiding nuclear war that emphasizes circumstantial craziness fear the results of just such a piece of misinformation being believed by the American President. What would he or she do if it truly seemed as if New York had been attacked? If the President chose to "retaliate" for this chimerical Soviet strike on New York, what would the Soviets do in response? And so on into nuclear catastrophe. Students of the circumstantial craziness of crises



have no trouble at all envisioning an American President, aloft in his airborne command post and surveying the ruins of a post-nuclear war United States, echoing the famous lament of Shakespeare's Richard III. Only this time the President could say quite literally: "Information, information, my Kingdom for a piece of inaccurate information."

How should we evaluate the evolution of the psychology of avoiding nuclear war over the past decade and a half or so? In particular, what are we to make of these radical departures from the mainstream rational actor psychology which has held nuclear policy firmly in its grip for so long? First, and perhaps most important, the psychological radicals have injected into the nuclear debate an urgency which has been missing for a generation. John Steinbruner spoke the discomfiting truth in 1976 when he argued persuasively that "the entire topic [of nuclear strategy and arms control] has become established, familiar, middle-aged and - let us admit - rather boring."<sup>22</sup> This is no longer true, mainly because of the radical challenges mounted recently by those whose psychological views permit them to imagine with ease plausible paths to an inadvertent nuclear war. Taken together, these surveyors of the newer psychologies of avoiding nuclear war can imagine several classes of scenarios during which we might, in effect, forget the singular lesson of the nuclear age: That a nuclear war must never be fought. ← This influx of assumptions and arguments from sources of psychology other than economics and game-theory may eventually transform

the nuclear debate in ways, which are, at present, difficult to predict.

Then again, they may not. For altogether too much of the literature of these new psychologies of avoiding nuclear war is either so flawed logically, so empirically dubious or so reductively and esoterically psychological that it may in some of its more extreme forms be doomed to policy-irrelevance. For example, arguments which rely for their credibility upon the putative insanity of leaders are unlikely to have much impact, particularly on leaders themselves. Moreover, arguments that rely, as do those of the pure circumstantialists, on analogies between international affairs and the spinning of roulette wheels or the flipping of coins are just plain false. These analogies fail to take into account the possibility of human learning, whereby the risk of nuclear war might gradually be reduced, because of the superpowers having made conscious decisions that make war between them less likely.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, analogies between the clinical consulting room and international politics, which are extraordinarily popular among psychiatrists and psychologists, are also highly dubious. In fact, the quasi-anarchic world of sovereign states is in important respects the inverse of the artificially supportive environment the psychological clinician tries in most cases to establish. Finally, we must not fail to notice the implications of an important anomaly confronting the psychologies that emphasize the significance of stress in crises. As many studies



have shown, though indirectly, the psychological effects of stress in nuclear and non-nuclear contexts may be quite different. For whereas the top-level decision-making in recent cases like the Falklands/Malvinas War and the two recent Middle East Wars seems to exhibit the full range of psychological devolution, the reverse appears to have occurred during the Cuban missile crisis, the capital case by far of nuclear danger.<sup>24</sup> In the cases of conventional conflict, leaders judgments seemed, as the crises wore on, to become ever more detached from the constraints of objective reality and increasingly unable to distinguish between their fears and the intentions of the adversary. But in the missile crisis President Kennedy, to take only the most obvious example, moved rapidly from relatively simplistic judgments about the Soviets to a very intense effort to discover Khrushchev's motivations and constraints. It may well be that, psychologically speaking, nuclear danger really is unique. If it is, then we ought to be very skeptical about attempts made to generalize the psychological analyses of non-nuclear crises to hypothetical nuclear cases. I will come back to this point in Chapter VIII (below), where I examine the quite different roles fear seems to play in non-nuclear and nuclear contexts.

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In sum, the new psychologies of avoiding nuclear war have so far shown themselves to be policy-irrelevant, for various reasons. This has been admitted by several leading exponents of the conspiratorial approaches, especially Lebow. In a passage

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remarkable for its courage and honesty, he recently pointed out the source of the difficulty facing all those seeking to replace the rational actor psychology of avoiding nuclear war with a psychological perspective that permits a serious investigation of the risk of inadvertent nuclear war - that takes this possibility seriously as an event that, under certain (specifiable) conditions, is very likely to happen. According to Lebow:

Deterrence, which, relatively speaking, is easy to implement, may nevertheless not be a very effective strategy of conflict management, because it does not address the most important sources of aggression. On the other hand, efforts to alleviate the kinds of insecurities that actually encourage or even compel leaders to pursue aggressive foreign policies do not seem very likely to succeed.<sup>25</sup>

This is <sup>NO</sup> Lebow's paradox: That the rational actor psychology underlying classical deterrence theory is psychologically bankrupt - it has no place in its lexicon for the psychological implications of the fear engendered by attempts at deterrence - while an irrational actor psychology focussed on the degradation of rational decision-making in crises is pragmatically bankrupt - policy-makers do not like its message, nor do they understand it, hence they have no idea how to implement policies in accord with it. Lebow is quite direct about why the irrational actor psychologies, even those emphasizing stress and crises, is

likely to remain pretty much an academic exercise. Neither he nor anyone else has so far imagined a plausible means for interverning directly into the lives of leaders so as to reduce the intensity of the psychological needs that seem to motivate many failures of non-nuclear deterrence (and which, by analogy, are believed to be primary psychological culprits in some hypothetical failure of nuclear deterrence). Leaders, even (or perhaps especially) in crises, are unlikely to believe that they are becoming progressively less rational, let alone believe that psychological counseling of themselves is the key to resolving crises successfully. Thus Lebow is correct, I believe, to ask: What is to be the practical point of the new irrational actor psychologies of avoiding nuclear war? How will the new understandings they generate help eventually to reduce the risk of inadvertent nuclear war?

If there is a single salient characteristic of the irrational actor psychologies of avoiding nuclear war it is not their incessant reductive psychologizing - though that alone is reason enough to doubt its prospects for policy-relevance. Rather it is their tone. As from some collective, psychological Jeremiah, these pronouncements are hurled at policy makers, or anyone suspected of giving aid and comfort to rational actor deterrence theory, like thunderbolts from on high. Little, if any, thought seems in most of these cases to be given to whether it is likely that members of the policy community will receive these dark, psychologically-based prophecies in anything like

*Which Blight suppresses (I suspect)  
to be the only relevant analysis, on  
"actors" ! or "learners"*



the manner intended by these Jeremiahs. I believe we may bear witness once again therefore, to an example of what William Jones long ago called "The psychologists' fallacy."<sup>26</sup> What this means in the present context is roughly that the irrational actor psychologists have, by and large, forgotten (or perhaps lost interest in discovering) what the leaders in some future nuclear crisis would be trying to do, and what their situation would look and feel like to them. They have chosen to ignore the psychological surface of things in the hope of discovering a hidden psychological reality which they can causally connect to their intuitive judgment of the way a nuclear crisis would probably spiral out of control and into a nuclear holocaust. These irrational actor psychologists yearn for policy-makers to comprehend that they have a darker side to their nature, which comes to the fore in efforts to deter an adversary, especially in crises, and that this dark side is likely to bring down their nations and perhaps even the world itself in the perverse unfolding of the next nuclear crisis.

It is no wonder that most of the irrational actor psychologies have failed to make inroads on the rational actor psychology which has provided the conceptual foundations for nuclear strategy and arms control for over a generation. Those which do seem potentially important have, significantly, quite modest ambitions regarding attempts to retard the tendency in crises toward irrationality. For instance, the authors of Hawks, Doves, and Owls argue, first, for "balanced deterrence,"

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which means that we ought simultaneously to pursue old-fashioned attempts at deterrence while also seeking to reduce the impact of nuclear accidents and the probability of miscommunication in crises. Second, they sensibly forego needlessly heavy borrowing of largely unfalsifiable propositions from psychological literatures and hopelessly reductive proposals for, in effect, laying out leaders on a clinical couch where their dark, stressed psyches might be examined and corrected.\* Instead, they propose measures which seem to hold some promise of affecting the conditions which may give rise to degraded rationality, thus to inadvertent nuclear war, measures such as Permissive Action Links (PALs) on submarines and crisis control centers.<sup>27</sup> Thus these authors understand that the conduct of international politics is an extraordinarily difficult business, far more difficult than merely assigning blame\* after the fact, as so many irrational actor psychologists are inclined to do. As a result, it is possible that efforts such as these may already be having an impact on the way at least some policy-makers and the much larger community of policy analysts think about trying to avoid inadvertent nuclear war.<sup>28</sup> This impact will be modest, if it occurs at all, but its likelihood of affecting the policy process is far greater than that of the Jeremiahs among the throng of irrational actor psychologies recently arrived on the scene, unveiling policy-makers, blaming them for lacking the wisdom of a psychological hindsight forbidden them by their very roles as policy makers.

\* Does B object to criticism of leaders?  
(He wants to be psychological, but wholly  
sympathetic!)



In sum, there is a good deal of ferment among students of nuclear risk about the sort of psychological assumptions they believe ought to be made as one approaches questions of how to avoid nuclear war. Many of the best among these scholars are profoundly dissatisfied with what they take to be the baseless complacency underlying traditional nuclear strategy, a complacency they regard as rooted in a rational actor psychology that is too divorced from the reality of nuclear crises to be of much further use. These psychological revisionists regard inadvertent nuclear war as the real problem, one that grows more acute with the addition of each new nuclear weapon system and each sign of deterioration in U.S.-Soviet relations. Some of these cannot be taken seriously because they are totally out of their depth in trying to apply psychologically-based analogies to international politics, an endeavor with which they clearly are unfamiliar. But some of the members of this group are very knowledgeable and serious about demonstrating that in crises, rationality is degraded, that this degradation raises the probability of a catastrophic nuclear war; and that measures must be taken which thwart the psychological rush toward oblivion that many see occurring in some imagined nuclear crisis.

The problems of the irrational-actor psychologies are mainly these: First, because so many of even the very best irrational actor psychologists are messianic in tone and substance, their psychological thunderbolts have so far not

struck many policy makers or analysts anywhere near the heart. A way, perhaps one modeled on the less aggressive, incremental and balanced approach adopted in Hawks, Doves, & Owls, must be found which joins the psychological concern over nuclear inadvertence with the policy-makers' keen cognizance of the enormous uncertainties and difficulties they will face in a crisis. Second, and ultimately more important, it remains to be demonstrated, either by historical, psychological or analogical analysis, that rationality is degraded in a nuclear crisis. As I argue later on in Chapter VII, the missile crisis cannot plausibly be interpreted in this way. Thus the purveyors of irrational actor psychologies must eventually show that their fears about inadvertent war should also be regarded justifiably as fears of inadvertent nuclear war. But this means that they must ultimately demonstrate that the missile crisis was, psychologically speaking, atypical of nuclear crises, past and future. This will be a tall order if, as I believe, the missile crisis has been the single episode in the nuclear age in which inadvertent nuclear war became a live possibility in the minds of leaders on both sides. In their enthusiasm for proclaiming the obsolescence of the rational actor psychology, the revisionists may indeed protest too much when they try to generalize their analysis to the nuclear context. There may in fact be something about a nuclear crisis, about the nascent belief that one is being overtaken by events and that as a result the world could be destroyed, that brings out a degree of

Wow!



rationality in leaders scarcely to be expected in other contexts. It may be, <sup>\*</sup> in other words, that rational actors manage international politics only, or at least mainly, in a nuclear crisis. If true, such a conclusion would be heavy with implications for both the study and execution of foreign policy. These are taken up in the final chapter.

*4 B's conclusion!*

V. PHENOMENOLOGICAL PSYCHOLOGY: THE LOOK AND FEEL OF  
INADVERTENT NUCLEAR DANGER

The majority of men are subjective toward themselves and objective toward all others, terribly objective sometimes - but the real task is to be objective toward oneself and subjective toward all others..

Kierkegaard, Journals, 1848

Let us return to our point of departure: That over the long run, if we are to have a major nuclear war, it will very likely have to be an inadvertent one, occurring because the perverse circumstances of an evolving crisis lead one or more parties of the conflict to forget the fundamental lesson of the nuclear age, at least since the Cuban missile crisis: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. As we have seen, advocates of a rational actor psychology have a good deal of difficulty imagining such an occurrence, while many of the purveyors of the newer irrational actor psychologies can do so with ease, even virtuosity. The most extreme formulations of these views - which, unfortunately, are among the most popular to each of their constituencies - lead one to conclude that under anything like present conditions, an inadvertent nuclear war is either virtually impossible or virtually inevitable. Both take an awful lot for granted about the actual psychological life of leaders in a nuclear crisis, the one assuming blithely that rationality will prevail, the other shouting in a virtual panic that it will not. Neither offers much insight, if any, into the psychological process according

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to which nuclear risk would be raised, lowered or would remain about the same. Each is so heavily theory-driven, so dependent for its credibility upon the acceptance of a vast network of theoretical propositions about the human mind, that it has proved impossible so far to imagine a way to adjudicate the debate raging between them. Even the sensible framework of Hawks, Doves, & Owls has helped little. The authors posit "Model I" (rational) factors and Model II" (non-rational) factors but the relative applicability of each, and especially the process by which one or the other comes to dominate - these are left quite mysterious. The result has been that rational actor psychologists like Schelling have voiced great perplexity over what a "model II" factor actually is, while proponents of the irrational actor psychology are likely to doubt the existence of "Model I" factors.<sup>1</sup> Neither appears to believe, based on this strategy of dividing and thus hoping to account for the psychological variability in nuclear risk, why it needs to regard the other as, in effect, separate but equal.

Yet the authors of Hawks, Doves, & Owls are obviously correct to assert that there is something in both the rational and irrational actor psychologies. It is also obvious that it will not do to hold merely that people are sometimes rational, other times not so rational, or that such a difference in behavior is to be accounted for by postulating "factors" which are responsible. In fact, I believe, it is not the axiomatic

rationality or irrationality that ought to attract one's interest in these approaches, for these are usually given as assumptions within which one is expected to interpret facts, rather than as having been empirically derived in any meaningful sense.

What is it, then, that is central to each sort of psychology which might in turn lead on to a more empirical, less abstract examination of the mental life of leaders in crises? What is it about them that might help lead us methodologically to circumvent the rather arid and fruitless polemics over whether politicians are rational or whether they are not? I would argue, first, that the central kernel of wisdom in the rational actor psychology exemplified by Schelling is its insistence on placing purposeful human action at the center of any inquiry into avoiding inadvertent nuclear war. "Inadvertence," as Schelling has written, "is in the steps that lead up to where somebody believes...it is safer to launch than not to."<sup>2</sup> This is fundamental: We begin with belief, especially with the psychological shift in belief which will (or might) run counter to the central lesson of the nuclear age and compel a leader to decide to go to nuclear war. This shift in belief, from regarding nuclear war as anathema to nuclear war as the only remaining option, is the basic psychological problem to be solved if we are fully to understand the phenomenon of inadvertent nuclear war. For it is simply inconceivable that we could move from a standing start to the initiation of a major



nuclear war without the causal intrusion of an enormous number of conscious decisions leading, finally, to an anguished but conscious decision to launch. How this mental evolution would occur ought to be our first question, and it begins with Schelling's assumption that human thought and action will be at the center of any series of events leading to nuclear war.

What of the psychological revisionists, those who are convinced that irrationality lay at the heart of the puzzle of how we might one day find ourselves in a nuclear war? What is their centrally useful insight? I believe it is this: Serendipitous circumstances, craziness and the circumstantial craziness of crises must be significant contributors to any process leading to a totally destructive, major nuclear war. If a path to any potential nuclear war were actually as familiar, controlled or ordinary as waiting on the corner for a bus to pass (rather than inviting disaster by stepping in front of it) then, short of a suicidal mental breakdown, inadvertent nuclear war would seem to everyone, as it seems to Schelling, virtually unimaginable. Yet in a nuclear crisis, the irrational actor psychologists believe, the situation is likely to seem stranger than fiction, events will seem to be racing beyond human control and the resulting sense of nuclear danger may appear anything but ordinary. They are no doubt correct to believe these things; they were certainly true of leaders in the Cuban missile crisis. There ought to be no doubt, therefore, that in any nuclear crisis leading to nuclear war, unintended consequences of the actions of leaders will play a central role.

*and of others?*

How might these diverse requirements - the dual emphasis upon the centrality of human action and of unintended consequences of human action - be combined in a way which leads us deeper into the psychological requirements for initiating (or avoiding) an inadvertent nuclear war? We can combine these insights, I believe, if we merely make one simple assumption: that leaders in a superpower crisis will be at least as aware of the centrality of their actions, and of the unintended and only partially predictable consequences of their actions, as are psychological analysts who examine their thought and behavior after the fact. Indeed, leaders are likely to be far more sensitive to their responsibilities and limitations than are analysts. But if we admit this much, as indeed we should, then we arrive at a somewhat folksy but nonetheless highly significant principle: that the evolving psychological life of leaders in a deep nuclear crisis will be characterized by intense awareness of the rising risk of inadvertent nuclear war. By granting our leaders, past and present, roughly the same degree of prescience we psychologists and other students of nuclear policy customarily attribute to ourselves, we would expect leaders in such crises to act pretty much as we believe we might. That is, far from confronting a superpower crisis in a no-hum manner, like the experienced, curb-bound pedestrian confronts a speeding bus, leaders are likely to be preoccupied with exactly the sorts of things psychologists concerned with inadvertence worry about: unintended consequences, odd circumstances, bad

also: values (male, folk, militarist, org...)  
org behavior...  
needs, from position, response

not always!

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"crisis"

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information, shortage of time and so on. President Kennedy is said to have made a remark during the missile crisis which exemplifies this principle of responsibility and feared inadvertence. "The great danger and risk in all of this," he said to his brother Robert, "is a miscalculation - a mistake in judgment."<sup>3</sup> Embedded in this statement are both of the central aspects of the psychology of a nuclear crisis we are seeking: The deep sense of the significance of human judgment and action, and the deep fear that actions taken to avoid war and to attain the ends of foreign policy which seemed to warrant entry into the crisis might lead, instead, to war and even to catastrophe.

In fact, the fear of nuclear inadvertence seems increasingly to have preoccupied American political leaders as the missile crisis evolved. The President and his closest associates came greatly to fear the unintended, potentially catastrophic consequences of actions taken to keep American commitments to prevent the establishment of a Soviet nuclear arsenal in the Western hemisphere. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara came to fear inadvertent nuclear war on the very first imagined step of escalation beyond the naval quarantine of Cuba, which was to be the bombing of all four missile sites under construction in Cuba, followed up by a massive invasion of the island. Here is one scenario of inadvertence McNamara recently recalled fearing a very great deal:

not all;  
not enough

Those of us who were concerned about Soviet reaction to air strikes or invasion didn't believe that the Soviet political leaders, even in the face of a massive airstrike or invasion, would authorize - or thought it unlikely, I should say - that the Soviet political leaders would authorize the launch of a nuclear weapon from the island of Cuba against the U.S. But we didn't know that they had the power to prevent it. And in the face of a military strike by the U.S. against a missile site or an invasion, we couldn't be sure that the second lieutenant in command wouldn't, perhaps quite properly in his mind, feel that it was his responsibility to launch the nuclear weapon before it was destroyed.<sup>4</sup>

*Didn't  
think about  
SAMs!  
or AA!*

For McNamara, the essence of understanding what it was like to try to manage the missile crisis is a poignant paraphrase of the dilemma at the heart of feared nuclear inadvertence: The fear of an event no one on either side wants to happen, but may happen anyway, as an unintended consequence of actions which seem necessary to protect one's vital interests. A necessity for action is felt, but so is the fear of the ultimate consequences of the action, which would be self-obliteration.

According to Robert McNamara, "... nuclear weapons really didn't play a part in the Cuban missile crisis, in the sense that we never intended to use them... But it is not true that they weren't on our minds."<sup>5</sup> In other words, nuclear weapons had no role in the outcome, other than that their use was feared by all: Not threatened, at least certainly not directly, but

*Yes*



feared anyway. I believe a psychology pertinent to this evolving fear in a crisis is what we must seek. We must, to put it in McNamara's terms, seek to understand more adequately what, exactly, was on his mind - what is on anyone's mind - when caught in a situation like that which faced leaders on what became the last weekend of the missile crisis? What, exactly, is this fear of nuclear inadvertence about, and what must it be like to have such thoughts and feelings in those contexts? And what would such a psychology be like in which an attempt is made to retain fidelity to both the lived experience of awesome responsibility and of awesome fear of inadvertent nuclear war? In a phrase, this psychology of inadvertent nuclear war will focus on the evolution in crises of the fear of nuclear inadvertence itself, - on the fear of circumstances beyond one's control, the fear of the effects of stress, the fear that the adversary is having the same fears and the fear, finally, that he may therefore conclude rather shortly that no option is available other than war, perhaps leading to nuclear war. This is not a psychology designed to distinguish between rational and irrational actors. It is instead a psychology of actors who are very keenly aware of their responsibility, vulnerability and of the effects the stress of the crisis is probably having on their ability to manage it. It is not a psychology of leaders who are likely to forget the cardinal lesson of the nuclear age, but rather the psychological narrative of leaders who fear that they, or their adversary, may soon forget it. It is therefore

centrally concerned with understanding how leaders of the superpowers in a deep crisis might lose their confidence in the mutuality and robustness of the nuclear learning which they have uppermost in their own minds: A nuclear war can never be won and must never be fought.

Some such attempt to articulate a set of narratives of feared nuclear inadvertence would fulfill the basic requirements of what, in the lexicon of psychology, would be called a phenomenological description. The goal of phenomenological psychology is to get as accurate a description as possible of the evolution of "the stream of thought," as William James called it, as it flows creatively onward and as it is experienced by individual people.<sup>6</sup> Phenomenologists tend to distinguish between two complementary characteristics of evolving mental life: Its intentionality, or what the mental life is about; and its subjectivity, or what it must be like to have such thoughts and feelings within just those situations that a person is experiencing?<sup>7</sup> These two sorts of descriptions - of what mental activity is about and what it is like to experience it - together constitute an attempt to pry open the meaning a given pattern of thought and feeling has for a person. In the context of a nuclear crisis, therefore, we should seek to address these questions: First, what sorts of events mean to leaders in a deep crisis that the risk of inadvertent nuclear war is high or low, stable, rising or diminishing? Second, we need to ask: What would it actually be



like, operating within the bounds of some estimate of the extent and directionality of nuclear inadvertence, to confront the situation in a position of great power and responsibility? If we focus on these canonical questions, a phenomenological approach to the psychology of avoiding inadvertent nuclear war can meet the requirements we have set for a useful psychological approach to these questions, one that avoids the essentially fruitless controversy over the rationality or irrationality of nuclear policy-makers, but which begins with the central methodological propositions of both the traditional rational actor psychology and the revisionist irrational actor psychology. We would focus our inquiry on conscious, purposeful human thought and action which is concerned with the implications of the evolving fear of inadvertent nuclear war. It would thus represent an attempt to get vicariously as deep as possible into the look and feel of nuclear danger. It would be an attempt, above all else, to open up a new way of approaching questions of inadvertent nuclear war, a way of seeing them in a less reductive psychological light which is tied far more closely to the lived experience of policy-makers than it is to the theories of advocates of either the rational or irrational actor psychologies.

Let us remind ourselves of the two categories of fundamental significance to a leader in a crisis who begins to fear nuclear inadvertence. First, there is awareness of absolute, irremediable vulnerability. As Robert Jervis has written, "it

*Fear of imminent nuclear war is not irrational.  
Fear of loss of control. ("Reasonable, unfettered based fear,  
reflecting panic, wanting (not me-  
"error") is enough. Indivisibility may be  
misleading.  
Incentive of  
D-L.  
or of limited  
nuclear war.*

-80-

is not an exaggeration to speak of the nuclear revolution...  
[because] the side that is ahead is no more protected than the  
side that is behind."<sup>8</sup> Leaders of the superpowers know  
already, and in a nuclear crisis will (and have) come to know in  
a profoundly visceral way that they cannot defend themselves or  
their citizens from nuclear catastrophe. Under normal  
circumstances, this is not necessarily an item of breathless  
concern, primarily because of the nearly ubiquitous faith that  
leaders are rational and that they will not, therefore, initiate  
a process leading to national suicide by launching off into a  
nuclear war. But as fear of inadvertence begins to rear its  
enigmatical head, and as leaders begin to believe that  
rationality alone may not prevent nuclear war, the fact of  
vulnerability to holocaust takes on newly sinister meaning.

Second, there is the related fear of the momentum of the  
crisis itself - fear that in some darkly mysterious way, the  
crisis will cause one or more of the central actors to  
de-emphasize, or even momentarily to forget about their  
vulnerability and thus to initiate a nuclear war. Schelling  
believes that these worries can lead to great danger. "Nothing  
is more dangerous to either side in a nuclear confrontation," he  
writes, "than the anxiety on the other side, the reciprocated  
anxiety about the breakdown of confidence in the ability to keep  
the crisis from exploding into war."<sup>9</sup> Schelling has long  
believed that some such process of mutually escalating anxiety  
in a nuclear crisis greatly increases the risk of a preemptive

NO  
(D-L)



attack by whichever side gives in first to the anxiety. Whether or not this is so - I do not believe it is borne out by the resolution of the missile crisis - it seems clear that these are likely to be the brute psychological facts of a nuclear crisis: Deep awareness of mutual vulnerability to catastrophe and mutual fear that unimpeachable knowledge of the potentially dreadful consequences of total vulnerability will become swamped by fear of losing control of the course of events, sending governments and nations on a spiralling path to catastrophe.

B sign  
has poss.  
(actual)  
VFR comm?

It is important, finally, to appreciate the various dimensions of the methodological rational for beginning any psychological inquiry into inadvertent nuclear war phenomenologically, by seeking a fine - grained description of the look and feel of inadvertent nuclear danger. First, it permits a greater degree of confidence in our attempts at prediction than we are likely to attain if we subscribe to one of the theory-driven, abstract rational or irrational actor psychologies of avoiding nuclear war. For all we know, leaders in any future nuclear crisis will think, feel and act in ways that are similar to those which characterized the leaders who managed the first (and I would argue, the only) such crisis so far - the Cuban missile crisis. With regard to a psychological understanding of the next nuclear crisis, therefore, we simply must get closer to the bone of what participation in that horrifying episode was about, and what it was like to be there, then. And we really do seem to be presented in this case with

an overall "N" of I - one crisis, in October, 1962. It seems to have been the only crisis so far in which fear of inadvertent nuclear war came to play a controlling, and eventually a decisive role in its conduct and resolution. But this means that, since we cannot broaden our psychological data-base without doing untoward damage to the empirical veracity of our enterprise, we must try to deepen our understanding of the one case we have. Even referring to the missile crisis as a "case" may be misleading, implying it is a case of something for which other cases can be named as at least approximately analogous. It is far more likely, in fact, that one cannot plausibly attribute the resolution of any other intense crisis to the genuine, palpable fear of inadvertent nuclear war. So if we want to know more about what the situation will seem like, and what the likely responses will be next time, we may have no choice other than to seek deeper vicarious entry into the leaders' view of the missile crisis.

A second reason for preferring to begin any inquiry into nuclear inadvertence within the perspective of phenomenological psychology is that it provides a means for pursuing relatively straightforward and convincing explanations of the actions of leaders in the missile crisis. It is almost impossible to over-emphasize the perplexity of a good many serious students of the missile crisis, and a few of its more important participants too, in the face of what they regard as the mysterious (and to some totally inexplicable) behavior of the American government

1973?!

(India-Pak  
1971?)

Quincy

11



in October, 1962 (some of which are discussed at length in Chapters VII and VIII, below). But just to dip into the flavor and magnitude of this widespread perplexity, one can do no better than to cite an anecdote told by Richard E. Neustadt. He reports hearing the following syllogism argued at a Rand Corporation briefing by an Air Force General shortly after the missile crisis:

1. The Soviets are rational.

*KEY (and in control)*

2. The U.S. was publicly committed to removing the missiles from Cuba by force, if necessary.

3. The U.S. had overwhelming tactical and strategic superiority.

*assuming perfect FS coop!  
in Corbett: not Europe/India*

Therefore:

4. The Soviet Union had to capitulate, pull back and remove the missiles.

*(DE, 62)*

5. There was absolutely no need to hurry the crisis to a premature conclusion, no danger of war (certainly no danger of nuclear war), and no need to offer Khrushchev a "deal", by promising not to invade Cuba in exchange for a promise to remove the offensive weapons.

6. The only reason the deal was struck and a needless compromise reached was [what the General referred to as] "the flap in the White House."<sup>10</sup>

General Maxwell Taylor recently put the same view somewhat more picturesquely. "We had Khrushchev over a barrel," he recalled, "but then we offered him a piece of cake."<sup>11</sup> The important point is not who is right but that the White House behavior, the "flap" and giving of gifts unnecessarily (as it is argued) is perplexing and unexplained. Mainly it is explained away, in these and many other instances, by attributing it to "irrationality." But to do so, even when the account is dressed to the nines in the finery of psychological theory, is hardly an explanation that can be expected to be persuasive, or even scarcely comprehensible to policy-makers. It is more likely to be regarded as a conceptual void where an explanation ought to be, as evidence that those doing the explaining do not have an accurate idea of what needs explaining. And the participants will have a valid point. For these "explanations" - whether the throwing up of the hands, an accusation of irrationality or a typical psychological analysis of behavior under stress - all have in common a preconceived notion of what, apriori, ought to have been done. The "explanations" are attempts to explain the functional distance between their own "ought" and the Kennedy Administration's "is". They are attempts to understand why one group of people - the actors - failed to do as another group - the explainers - believe the actors should have done.

It is in just such situations, where explanations and actors pass one another like ships in the night, that phenomenological psychology can help. Its goal, in the phrase made famous by



Edmund Husserl, is to get "back to the psychological facts themselves."<sup>12</sup> Of course this goal has been ridiculed as simplistic. We can never, says the chorus of critics, get to any such place, thus we must begin with our theories. True enough. But we ought to keep in mind that what Husserl had in mind, and what phenomenology stands for, is a goal, a direction, a way of approaching perplexities of human mental life and action, not an achievement. Phenomenologists begin with this proposition: If you are perplexed by an action, ask the actor what he or she was trying to do. Actors can often give helpful reason for acting as they did. The second proposition: If the reasons actors give for their actions still perplex you, try to understand the meaning the situation and action had for the actor. Do not turn first to theories derived from "literatures" or elsewhere. Turn to the actors. Try to get inside their own view of the situation more deeply. There will always be time for B? later to criticize them for being wrong, if in fact they have been guilty of delusions, or cowardice or irrationality of one sort or another. The phenomenologist begins with what passed for ordinary common sense before research literatures became the new common sense of professional psychological analysis.

It is well to recall what an explanantion is for. "Explanation," as Charles Taylor has reminded us, "involves... bringing the strange back to a place in the normal course of events."<sup>13</sup> Phenomenological psychology thus begins with the acting, experiencing person's view of "the strange." It seeks

to do so by means of intentional explanations. Implicit in the general's remark about "the flap in the White House" is the claim that the "flap" - the crescendoing fear of inadvertent nuclear war and subsequent actions derived from this fear - was unjustified. But justified or not, when compared with some preconceived notion of what was factual and correct, the intensity of the look and fear of nuclear danger was psychologically real to President Kennedy and his closest associates, and it eventually seems to have become the principal motive force driving their perception and action. In general, as Theodore Mischel has argued, an intentional explanation of the actors in such a situation seeks entry into "how it is that people...acquire conceptions of their engagement in the world, conceptions which may or may not be justified by the facts, and with how their conceptions enter into the generation of their behavior."<sup>14</sup> This is an important point, for it dispells the common but unfounded hearsay that phenomenology is relatively primitive or superficial, a mere preliminary exercise to orient oneself until one gets on with the real business of constructing causal explanations. But intentional explanations are also causal explanations. They seek entry into evolving streams of thought of individuals, so as to clarify how beliefs, fears and thoughts themselves contribute to the causal chain leading to the strange behavior that needs explaining. In an important sense, much of the material in the chapters which follow represents an attempt to



transform, by means of an intentional explanation, the mysterious "flap in the White House" into a comprehensible phenomenon with a point of origin, an evolutionary history and an outcome explained by the psychological evolution that produced it.

Explanations of human action as controversial and, in the view of some, strange as the behavior of the American managers of the missile crisis often follow the same pattern. We have encountered it in the remark about the White House "flap", in Maxwell Taylor's quizzical comment about why we offered an allegedly option-less and defeated Khrushchev a "piece of cake," and also in the first explanation of the driver's panicky stopping on a shrouded road (in Chapter 2). They all take the following form:

1. The outcome was sub-optimal
2. The actors did "X."
3. The actors should have done "Y."

Therefore:

4. The bad, unfortunate or unnecessary outcome  
is explained by the conceptual distance between  
"X" and "Y."

I have already tried to show that the validity of any such explanations is contingent on at least two important factors: First, the validity of the general theory upon which rests the claim that the explainer sees the situation relatively accurately, in hindsight, while the actor, moving through the

But for most (people)  
USAF "creeps" (what is  
puzzling) (not addressed by  
JFK) & JFK was as  
as he did,  
as long!

action without benefit of this theory, was the victim of illusion. Second, in order for such an explanation to be valid, one must argue convincingly that the reasons given by actors for their actions are unnecessary epiphenomena - not really the causes of the action. Of course, it is also possible to refuse to enter into any controversy over which explanation is correct. In this case, one would adopt a kind of live-and-let-live philosophy with regard to explanations that do and do not draw on the actual intentions of actors.

But in the field of nuclear policy, as with all questions of public policy, a relentless Darwinian principle is always at work selecting some explanations, predictions and policies as plausible, while rejecting others as beside the point of what sensible policy should be. In the world of nuclear policy, for example, the survival of the fittest explanations of policy-making derive from an environment composed of policy-makers, former policy-makers and those who aspire to be policy makers. We have already seen that the irrational actor psychologies of avoiding nuclear war have been more or less selected against by the policy community, in large part because the assumptions and language in which they are embedded are too foreign to those of policy-makers. This brings us to the third salutary feature of intentional explanations: They are far more likely to be perceived by policy-makers as policy-relevant. Because intentional explanations are meant to reconstruct, elaborate and refine the mental evolution of policy-makers,

and  
also...  
(self-  
serving)  
JGB  
given!



rather than to replace it with concepts and content that is foreign to their experience, intentional explanations will tend to "make sense" to them. In other words, the explanation of behavior is split off from the justification of behavior, resulting in a process which leads first to a far greater understanding of the psychological phenomena which are later to be deemed justifiable or lamentable. Thus we encounter another salutary by-product of focussing on intentional explanations of actors: Far from being a mere rubber stamp for the actors' view of the situation, the intentional approach characterizing phenomenology actually holds greater promise of policy-relevant criticism. For as actors come to believe that they are truly understood, that their critics-psychological critics in the present instance - understand why they believed they had to do as they did, their criticism is more likely to be regarded as pertinent. The criticism will be seen as criticism of them - the actors - rather than criticism of some fictional, psychopathological, deluded creatures with whom they are totally unfamiliar.

A phenomenological psychologist will therefore in every case seek first to understand before accusing or praising. This ordering of priorities ought to make sense not only to the policy community; it constitutes good epistemological sense as well. As William James once sensibly said, we ought to try to begin our investigation of any sort of mental life with a single assumption: "thought goes on."<sup>15</sup> But this is far more

difficult to accomplish now than it was in James's era. James himself lamented in 1890 that professional psychology had entered what he called its "less simple phase," with its ritual genuflections to hard science, the pursuit of facts for their own sake and, in general, a greatly diminished respect for the integrity of persons and their own view of why they do what they do.<sup>16</sup> Today it is almost axiomatic that psychologists, or those who have taken the time to become somewhat sophisticated in the vast, dry tundra of psychological literature, know far more about us than we can possibly know about ourselves. Phenomenological psychology rejects this attitude and is in this respect a throwback to an earlier time, when psychological inquiry began by talking to people, by asking them why they behaved as they did. On its side, however, this approach does not require an audience of policy makers and policy analysts to swallow the scientistic baggage of a century's accumulation before the digestion of a psychological explanation of policy-making can occur. On the contrary, it represents an attempt to get the policy-makers' stories straight. It tries to make sense of them, for policy-makers. In effect, whereas the "less simple" psychology with which our entire society is saturated has been appropriated in order to teach policy-makers how to behave, phenomenologists will try to learn from policy-makers something of why they acted as they did. In other words, phenomenologists try to begin with persons, not with theories.



In the present context, this means we should try initially and vicariously to re-enter the evolving mental life of the President and the men surrounding him during the Cuban missile crisis, and to reconstruct as best we can the look and feel of inadvertent nuclear danger as it appeared to them. We must go backward and take a closer look at the psychological reality of the crisis, but in so doing we must try to step figuratively into streams of thought and feeling which moved forward , uncertainly, ignorant of the outcome, fearful of the worst.

VI. THE EVOLUTION OF FEARED NUCLEAR INADVERTENCE:  
A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF  
AVOIDING NUCLEAR WAR

Now the dread of possibility holds him as its prey...  
He who went through the curriculum of misfortune  
offered by possibility lost everything, in a way that  
no one has lost it in reality.

Kierregaard, The Concept of Dread, 1844

In his dialogue, Meno, Plato has his protagonist put the following question to Socrates, a question heavy with implications for any psychological inquiry, but one that is especially pertinent in the present context in which psychological analysis and its subject matter seem so incommensurably separated from one another. Meno asks:

And how will you enquire, Socrates, into that which you do not know? What will you put forth as the subject of your enquiry? And if you find what you want, how will you ever know that this is the thing which you did not know?<sup>1</sup>

*Investigation of  
Socrates*

In paraphrasing his interlocuter, Socrates means to show that the question is absurd: "You argue," says Socrates, "that a man cannot enquire either about that which he knows or about that which he does not know."<sup>2</sup> As is evident in the reply of Socrates to Meno, Socrates believes that this line of reasoning leads to the preposterous conclusion that learning is



impossible. As you may recall, he escapes both horns of the dilemma posed by Meno by postulating innate forms, "Platonic" ideals, which are present in all human beings from birth, and which are most efficiently learned by a "Socratic" method designed to draw out this innate knowledge.

The psychology of avoiding nuclear war, however, is hung up on both horns of Meno's paradoxical question. On the one hand are policy-makers-past, present and (perhaps)future - who quite literally have no conception whatever of any psychological problem needing to be solved. Their job is the analysis, formulation and execution of those aspects of foreign policy which seem to relate to nuclear risks. They know nothing of the complex psychological theories of either the rational actor or irrational actor psychologies which dominates psychological discussion of nuclear issues. Following Meno, if we ask how policy makers will therefore inquire into that which they do not know, the answer is obvious: They won't. They wouldn't know a psychological problem in the formal sense if they crashed straight into it. On the other hand are the many purveyors of various sorts of psychologies of avoiding nuclear war. Heavily armed with their theories, bearing supreme faith that these theories are both empirically corroborated and capable of covering a vast array of domains within foreign policy analysis, these psychologists (in function, if not always called such) see examples and confirmations of their theories everywhere. They know, I believe, almost nothing of the complex psychological

life of nuclear policy-makers in just the sort of situation in which nuclear risk is greatest - in a nuclear crisis. Once again following Meno, if we ask how the psychologists of avoiding nuclear war might inquire into the evolving psychological life of nuclear policy-makers a life they believe their theories permit them to understand with perfect ease, the answer is once again obvious: They won't. And this is why, in my view, so little learning takes place between the psychologists and policy-makers who claim an identical goal: Avoiding a catastrophic nuclear war. Both groups are too ignorant of their own ignorance to see any point in a collaborative inquiry.

It is just such a situation that phenomenological psychology seeks to avoid by trying to derive its data on mental life, and by pitching its analyses of those data, so as to remain interesting and comprehensible to the actors whose actions need explaining, while also addressing in a sophisticated way questions of causation, prediction and ultimately, of policy. The trick is to articulate a framework in which a mutually informative dialogue can occur between actors and psychologists. And it is a trick. There are no hard and fast rules dictating an ideal ratio between abstraction and concreteness or between the use of a psychological idiom and those deriving directly from the lexicon of the actors. One rule, and one rule only, must always prevail: The psychological accounts of the thoughts, feelings and actions must ring true to actors, psychologists and ordinary people alike. The



descriptions of evolving mental life must tease out, to whatever extent possible, the meaning the events had for the actors, and these meanings must be capable of being grasped by those whose participation in the events in question can never be closer than second-hand. All must have a compelling sense of what it was like, and the sense must be made to conform to the psychological facts as best they can be determined. If one gets the impression that a phenomenological account may be highly dependent on the artistry of the psychologist, or more idiosyncratic than might be ideal, and more derived from unusual sources and methods than scientific psychology would warrant, one would be absolutely correct. Phenomenological psychology is not a science, in the sense that physics is a science. But it ought to be kept constantly in mind, as one proceeds through this centrally important chapter, that the goal is to get as close as possible to an understanding of forward-moving mental life; we want to participate in small chunks of lives, as they are lived. And life, need I add, is not a science. If it may be said to be anything at all, it is an art. So is politics, which forms the general outline of our inquiry into questions of the psychology of avoiding nuclear war. Einstein says somewhere that politics is harder than physics.<sup>3</sup> What I believe he meant by this is our point of departure into a phenomenological investigation of the psychological evolution in a nuclear crisis: That is, politics, conducted by human beings, is not governed by general laws, but is governed by conscious, sentient, complex governors. We can study the moon and the

stars and the atoms. This is how we have come to understand them. But if we are to understand politics and the people who make policy, we must come to know them. This is what phenomenology, stripped of a certain amount of obuscatory jargon it has accumulated in the past hundred years, is about.

It is important to keep in mind that the phenomenon which really interests us, toward which all psychologically oriented students of nuclear questions must continually turn their attention is this: The evolution of a crisis between the superpowers which eventually appears to become so perverse that nuclear war is chosen as the least-worst (or perhaps only) remaining option. Fortunately for the world at large, but unfortunately for purposes of comparative analysis, this has never occurred in our era of a bipolar arrangement of nuclear power. The point in stating this truism is to remind the reader that anyone trying to understand the psychological life in a crisis which might lead to all-out nuclear war is working largely in the dark, and must look to analogies with which to frame the inquiry. Some of the most popular classes of analogy have been non-nuclear crises which exploded into war, — psychological experiments on decision-making under stress, and the results of analyses of the game called "prisoners' dilemma."<sup>4</sup> In each of these classes of examples, students of the psychology of nuclear risk say, in effect: "The initiation of a nuclear war would be like 'X', so let's study 'X' and then

B's point:  
the  
difficult  
But...



generalize to the nuclear situation. One has no choice but to engage in analogical exercises in this matter.

So must phenomenological psychologists, though analogies will play a role different from that which they customarily play. Normally, analogies to the initiation of nuclear war must bear a good deal of the explanatory weight. A lot depends, for example, on whether the documented failures of non-nuclear deterrence are convincingly "like" some hypothetical failure of nuclear deterrence in some imagined superpower crisis. A phenomenological account is far less formally demanding of its analogies, which are meant merely to orient the reader, to suggest the steps in the analysis of actors which is to follow. The purpose is to encourage the reader to participate vicariously in an experience that is both common and held to be something like the analysis of the less common, perhaps even unique, action which is to follow. Nothing hangs on the specifics of the analogy. But the plausibility of the analytic framework for inquiry may (or may not) be greatly enhanced if it seems to the reader to exemplify certain aspects of the psychological phenomenon to be explained.

What we seek is this: Entry into the evolving psychological life of a certain sort of situation, one which seems to actors to be becoming increasingly perverse, so perverse, in fact, that they eventually commit the act many of their actions leading up to then were designed to help them avoid. What might the interior life of participation in such a situation be like?

Does everyday life provide us with any examples in which individuals undergo a radical shift in outlook, as a function of the increasing perversity of their situation? In fact, I believe this sort of thing occurs all the time, although it takes an artist (which I am not) to compress into just a few lines the feel of a person in such a situation.

In Iris Murdoch's novel, The Bell, we meet Dora, a young woman. She is about to take a train to meet her husband. She arrives early at the train station, boards the train and takes a seat. It is an extremely hot day and, as the train begins to fill up, Dora notices an elderly lady, who halts in the doorway to Dora's cabin. Moreover, the elderly lady appears to be a friend of the person sitting next to Dora. It suddenly occurs to Dora that perhaps she should give up her seat. The psychological stage is set, therefore, for the following mental evolution and action:

She had [Dora was thinking] taken the trouble to arrive early, and surely ought to be rewarded for this...

This was an elementary justice in the first comers having the seats...The corridor was full of old ladies anyway, and no one else seemed bothered by this, least of all the ladies themselves! Dora hated pointless sacrifices. She was tired after her recent emotions and deserved a rest. Besides, it would never do to arrive at her destination exhausted...She decided not to give up her seat.

She got up and said to the standing lady "Do sit down."<sup>5</sup>



From the moment Dora begins to entertain the possibility of giving up her seat, her situation becomes increasingly perverse. Perhaps she notices the old lady begin to weaken in the heat (or does she imagine it?). Moreover, the old lady is obviously anxious to ride next to her friend, presently seated next to Dora. With the passage of time, the probability rises that Dora will either be asked by the old lady to relinquish her seat (which would be embarrassing to Dora) or, far more humiliatingly, the old lady will soon faint from weakness, an unhappy event for which Dora must share the blame. Dora must also face the possibility of intervention by a third party - another passenger who notices the old lady's condition and affinity for Dora's seat; she must also prepare for a possible rapid escalation of her internal conflict as the old lady's knees begin to wobble furiously and her face becomes ashen; and in the worst possible circumstance, the old lady may collapse in a heap at Dora's feet, humiliating Dora and, upon her revival, get Dora's seat as well. So Dora offers the lady her seat and cuts her losses. She won't arrive fresh and rested, but she won't arrive guilt-ridden either. To preempt her own escalating sense of guilt and foreboding, she asks the old lady to please sit down.

TCS - type analysis

This vignette does not prove anything, of course, about the behavior of policy-makers in a nuclear crisis. But what I hope it suggests is that, psychologically speaking, Dora's crisis in its general outline is both familiar to us and also that it

Is this  
all  
internal  
JGB?!

NO

JGB - What role  
of unconscious  
is, fear...  
denial,  
wishes, etc.?

fulfills some of the important requirements of any nuclear crisis we might imagine. Among these are, first, the dilemma presented by a set of conflicting goals. The moment Dora recognizes that the old lady is both feeble and that she seeks her seat, the crisis begins. An internal struggle ensues in which personal comfort struggles mightily against moral obligation. Second, if we are to understand the meaning Dora's experience had for her, we need some insight into what is called hereafter in this chapter "the crystal ball effect." My brief interpretive passage following the selection from The Bell is a very primitive attempt to see and feel some of what I imagine any person like Dora would experience in such a situation. As the situation evolves, as she sees in her crystal ball more (and more humiliating) possibilities, Dora must have felt the pressure on her becoming increasingly intense. Finally, Dora encounters what I call later on full "situational perversity": A situation in which all the options seem bad. In Dora's case, it boils down perhaps to arriving tired, sweaty and more than a little embarrassed to meet her husband, versus riding out the duration in a state of possibly profound <sup>?</sup>embarrassment. If leaders in a nuclear crisis remain sane, we expect them to have to go through some such sequence of psychological evolution. For if there is to be an initiation of nuclear war, it must come only when a situation has grown to appear so perverse that nuclear war becomes the preferred option.



Or rather, leaders will fear that their situation will become that perverse. For what Dora really fears, what drives her situation toward perversity is nothing that has overtly happened or even, so far as she can tell, is presently happening. She instead fears inadvertence, the thing that has not yet happened that would be, from her point of view, disastrous, and which she is incapable of preventing from her seated position. And it may be useful to keep in the back of one's mind as we proceed through the evolution of situational perversity in a nuclear context, that it is Dora's moral precepts that turn out to be decisive contributors to the way she chooses to end the crisis. For in what follows there is more discussion of active, working morality than one typically finds in either philosophical works on nuclear questions or, certainly, then one is likely to find in works on psychological aspects of avoiding nuclear war. Call it an informed hunch: I believe that in situations which are at least as perverse as Dora's - and this would certainly seem to include that which would face the leaders of the superpowers on the brink of war - moral considerations may become controlling. In fact, in situations of feared inadvertence, I believe the sense of the perversity itself may derive mainly from moral anguish over not being able to envision a way around committing an act, or being responsible for committing an act, which one regards simply as wrong - as immoral.

The reader will notice that the following framework contains a number of illustrative figures, all of them in the form of graphs. There are, as will become obvious, no numbers attached to the axes of any of them. They should be taken no more (but also no less) seriously than is the analogy between Dora's train crisis and a nuclear crisis. For these too are meant not to prove, but to evoke the sense of the evolution of a certain sort of mental life. These "humanist graphs," as they have been dubbed by an engineer friend, should in other words be treated as pictures, as attempts to illustrate several dimensions of the fear of nuclear inadvertence which must, it seems to me, be controlling aspects of psychological evolution through a nuclear crisis. In fact, these humanist graphs do not derive from nothing, however. Participants in the missile crisis whose styles of thinking are as different as the strategist Robert McNamara and the historian McGeorge Bundy have said that the members of President Kennedy's EXCOMM did, indeed, carry around risk fractions for nuclear war in their heads, fractions not greatly dissimilar from those represented in the pictures which follow.<sup>6</sup> With these three caveats, then - regarding analogies, morality and illustrative pictures - we may move directly to a consideration of the phenomenological framework for studying the risk and prevention of inadvertent nuclear war.

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A. The Dilemma: Conflicting Goals:



Deep crises, though they often catch leaders by surprise, do not arise out of nothing. They require at least two major actors with at least partially overlapping vital interests. When such competing interests exist, and when one side is perceived by the other to have egregiously violated one of its non-negotiable interests, a crisis may occur that produces what Alexander George has called "the basic paradox and dilemma of crisis management":

The paradox is that there need be no crisis if one side is willing to forego its objectives and accept damage to the interests at stake. The dilemma, in turn, arises from a desire to do what may be necessary to protect one's most important interests but, at the same time, to avoid actions that may result in undesired costs and risks?<sup>7</sup>

This leads to an obvious but often neglected conclusion: That avoiding a nuclear war is only one of the goals of the leaders of any superpower who have seen fit to enter into a crisis with the other one. They must also strive to protect whatever interests were deemed sufficiently prized and threatened to warrant a tense confrontation in the first place.

Upon entering a crisis, therefore, a leader faces the situation represented in Figure 1.

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Insert Figure 1 Here

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At least two "curves" will be filled in before the crisis is resolved: One representing the estimated risk of inadvertent nuclear war; the other(s) representing the estimated risk of a more traditional foreign policy defeat - e.g., President Kennedy's fear of not getting the Soviet missiles removed from Cuba in October, 1962. The goal, so obvious but so difficult, is to achieve one's initial purpose, or something close to it, without the initiation of a disastrous war, and certainly without a suicidal nuclear war.

The dilemma of crisis management - protecting one's interests while avoiding unacceptable costs - was acutely felt from the very first meeting of President Kennedy's EXCOMM, on the morning after the offensive Soviet missile sites had been discovered in Cuba. President Kennedy asked Secretary of State Dean Rusk to lead off the meeting with a general survey of the situation and what was to be done about it. It was clear to Rusk then and there that the missiles had to be removed and that, by almost any means one could think of to remove them, the risk of an all-out nuclear war (what Rusk calls "General War") would be raised considerably. Here is how Rusk opened the first meeting of the EXCOMM the morning of October 16, 1962:

Mr. President, this is a, of course a [widely?] serious development. It's one that we, all of us, had not really believed the Soviets could, uh, carry this far... I do think we have to set in motion a chain of events that will eliminate this base. I don't think we [can?] sit still...



if we make it clear that, uh, what we're doing is eliminating this particular base or any other such base that is established [then] we ourselves are not moved to general war, we're simply doing what we said we should do if they took certain action... I think we'll be facing a situation that could well lead to general war; that we have an obligation to do what has to be done (but) do it in a way that gives, uh, everybody a chance to, uh, put the [word {unintelligible] down before it gets too hard.<sup>8</sup>

By the next day, October 17, the EXCOMM had reached a consensus that Rusk was correct.<sup>7</sup> This is revealed in a memo for discussion of that day by Presidential aide Theodore Sorensen. "... it is generally agreed," he said, "that the United States cannot tolerate the known presence of offensive nuclear weapons in a country 90 miles from our shore."<sup>9</sup> Then, in a concluding section he called "other questions or points of disagreement," Sorensen describes with striking prescience the more dangerous horn of the dilemma of crisis management, and in doing so he suggests immediately why the missile crisis involved what Richard Neustadt has called "a new dimension of risk."<sup>10</sup> Sorensen shows quite clearly that from the onset of the missile crisis, the dilemma of crisis management was of a sort and extent that were unprecedented: The danger was nuclear and the enemy was inadvertence of various sorts. Here, in the telegraphic prose of a staff memo, is the litany of feared nuclear inadvertence that would eventually reach, by October 27, almost unbearable intensity:

Whether Moscow would be either able or willing to prevent Soviet missile commanders from firing on United States when attacked, or Castro and/or his Air Force or any part of it attacking U.S. mainland. This includes the further question of whether, if a military strike is to take place, it must take place before these missiles become operational in the next 2 weeks or so.

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Whether Soviets would make, or threaten in response to any note, an equivalent attack on U.S. missiles in Turkey or Italy - or attack Berlin or somewhere else - or confine themselves to stirring up UN and world opinion.

What our response would be to such a Soviet attack or a Soviet defiance of blockade-and what their response would be to our response.

Whether Castro would risk total destruction by sending planes to U.S. mainland-or be able to control all his planes.<sup>11</sup>

We have already observed in Chapter III the way these fears persisted and intensified until, by October 27, Robert McNamara felt the implications of Sorensen's earlier memo right down in his viscera. The point to be emphasized here is that the basic dilemma of crisis management in a nuclear crisis was, throughout, felt keenly by the participants, and the fear of unacceptable losses was indeed the fear of an inadvertent nuclear war. The missiles must come out, all were agreed, and probably soon, within two weeks, a prophetic number given the eventual thirteen-day duration of the acute phase of the crisis. But what would be the cost of getting them out? Indeed, how could one even estimate with any degree of

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confidence what the risks of taking the various paths really were? How would one guess, for example, whether Castro could control his air force or whether Khrushchev could control his Strategic Rocket Forces, when it was perfectly plausible to assume that neither Castro nor Khrushchev could confidently answer such questions? And so began the uncertain journey to remove the missiles and to grope into a dimension of risk, and therefore of fear, that was (and is) unprecedented.

B. The Perception of Possibility: The Crystal Ball Effect.

The outbreak of World War I is customarily put forward as the prototype of an inadvertent war and, by analogy, the case whose main features will probably most closely resemble those of an inadvertent nuclear war, should one ever occur. In her book, The Guns of August, which ironically became a worldwide bestseller only months before the missile crisis, Barbara Tuchman advanced this thesis most persuasively. In her view, World War I was a war no one really wanted, a war which all the major participants may be said to have lost, and a war in which the seeds were sown for a far greater and calamitous conflagration scarcely a generation later. By late July, 1914, preparation for war on all sides - what today we dignify with the name "deterrence" - simply could no longer be stopped by force of human will, or at least not the will of anyone in charge of the major protagonists. By the last day of July, according to Tuchman:

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War pressed against every frontier. Suddenly dismayed, governments struggled and twisted to fend it off. It was no use. Agents at frontiers were reporting every cavalry patrol as a deployment to beat the mobilization gun. General staffs, goaded by their relentless timetables, were pounding the table for the signal to move lest their opponents gain an hour's head start. Appalled upon the brink, the chiefs of state who would ultimately be responsible for their country's fate attempted to back away but the pull of military schedules dragged them forward.<sup>12</sup>

The July crisis led to the guns of August, according to Tuchman, because in their attempt to protect what they took to be their interests, leaders on all sides failed to consider the possible costs of such protection, costs which would accrue inadvertently but no less tragically for all that.

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This is the sort of scenario many competent observers now regard as the most likely path to a major nuclear war.<sup>13</sup> Yet there is, of course, at least one immense difference between the evolution of psychological life in the leaders who led their nations into the First World War, and any leaders who find themselves poised in a crisis on the brink of what they believe to be an inadvertent nuclear war. Whereas leaders in 1914 could not foresee the extent of the catastrophic results of World War I, the leaders of the nuclear superpowers can hardly fail to imagine quite accurately the catastrophic results of a nuclear World War III. This has been called "the crystal ball effect"

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according to which "the enormous horror of nuclear weapons effects means that modern leaders have the equivalent of a crystal ball showing them the devastation at the end of a major war."<sup>14</sup> This crystal-clear foresight of the total doom following any nuclear war to come has led, in periods of peaceful competition, to a degree of prudence almost unprecedented among Great Powers as continually and unremittingly hostile toward one another as the United States and Soviet Union have been since 1945.

A leader in a nuclear crisis begins, I believe, to foresee any eventual nuclear war within the same categories that characterized the writing of so many of the most thoughtful writers of the 1920s. Perhaps the most significant characteristic of this literature, and according to some it represented a real departure in the public consciousness of the citizens of the Western world, was irony. As Paul Fussell has written, the first generation of writers after the First World War, looking backward with ghastly hindsight at the horror of the trenches, tried to articulate the meaning of their experience by means of irony, in order to exemplify its "means... so melodramatically disproportionate to its presumed ends."<sup>15</sup> But leaders in a nuclear crisis will face a situation which is, if anything, far more potentially ironic than anything one might have imagined in looking back on the trenches. This was recently stated poignantly by the wife of one of the key members of President Kennedy's EXCOMM: "When I

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discovered the situation we were in, "she recalls," I couldn't help wondering whether those few missiles in Cuba were really worth risking the destruction of our civilization, which had taken so long and so much dedication to construct."<sup>16</sup> There is no reason to believe that <sup>sic!</sup> his question - whether the end and (possible) means were commensurable - occurred to her only. Indeed, this sentiment may with ease be read between the lines of virtually the entire transcript of EXCOMM meetings of October 16, the only day for which transcripts of the secret tapes have so far been made available.

Two other distinguishing features of the nuclear crystal ball effect suggest that the sense of irony in a nuclear crisis is far more anxiety-provoking than anything faced by thoughtful veterans of the First World War. First, the leaders are looking into a crystal ball, not reading the record or drawing on memory. This is not a crystal ball that yields predictions; it only provides the general outline of a possible catastrophe. Events are contingent. Ends are invisible. Means are uncertainly efficacious. Second, and relatedly, leaders peering into a nuclear crystal ball will feel the full force of their own responsibility for avoiding the colossal irony of nuclear war. World War I is over. World War III has yet to occur. This powerful sense of seeing oneself moving among the ruins in a shattered crystal ball comes out in many ways in the material deriving from the EXCOMM meetings to which access has been given. For example, according to the minutes of the last

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meeting on October 27, a good deal of discussion occurred regarding civil defense measures in the event of a nuclear attack on the United States, and especially the suggestion from Robert McNamara that, in the event of a massive air strike on Cuba (which, you will recall, he regarded by then as "almost inevitable"), leaflets should be dropped first to warn civilians in Cuba to take cover.<sup>17</sup> Five million of them were made up, but were never used.<sup>18</sup> All these factors - the immensity of the horror in the nuclear crystal ball, the highly uncertain means and ends, and the sense of personal responsibility for the potential horror to come - all of these must lead to a fear of nuclear inadvertence every bit as uniquely powerful, in its psychological effects, as would be the physical effects of the weapons under their control which might conceivably be used.

According to Robert Kennedy, the ironic component of the crystal ball effect worked both backward and forward in the missile crisis, due to the President's immersion at the time in Tuchman's bestseller, The Guns of August. Looking backward at the inadvertent rush to disaster of 1914, the President told his brother: "I am not going to follow a course which will allow anyone to write a comparable book about this time, The Missiles of October."<sup>19</sup> No one will ever know how seriously President Kennedy took the presumed analogy between the First and Third World Wars. But Tuchman's book seems to have had quite an impact on him and, thus, on the conduct and outcome of the crisis. If so, we ought to observe a remarkable piece of

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learning on the part of a President in a very short time, brought on by the fear of an inadvertently shattering crystal ball. For President Kennedy's generation grew to maturity in the 1930s; for them, the lessons of history were chiefly the lessons provided by the failure of appeasement at Munich, 1938 and the failure of deterrence in the Pacific, December 7, 1941. Indeed, President Kennedy justified the naval quarantine to the American people in just those terms. Speaking on national television on October 22, he said: "The 1930s taught us a clear lesson: Aggressive conduct, if allowed to grow unchecked and unchallenged, ultimately leads to war."<sup>20</sup> Thus, the quarantine, which was designed to squeeze the Soviet missiles out of Cuba. But, perhaps stimulated by Tuchman's book, and certainly reinforced by the multitudinous scenarios of inadvertence he faced, he also understood, by the final weekend of the crisis, the lessons of 1914 as well. "If anybody is around to write after this," he told his brother Robert, "they are going to understand that we made every effort to find peace and every effort to give our adversary room to move. I am not going to push the Russians an inch beyond what is necessary."<sup>21</sup>

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The psychological evolution brought on by the crystal ball effect is represented in Figure 2.<sup>22</sup>

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In sum, it indicates the unavoidable awareness in leaders of the qualitative difference between an old-fashioned war-threatening crisis and a situation they regard as a potentially nuclear war-threatening crisis. They will see clearly in their crystal balls that in a major nuclear war, they will bear some responsibility for their nation having been annihilated beyond repair. They see, as Richard Neustadt has said, that the irreversible [will] become irreparable."<sup>23</sup> The Kaiser knew eventually that von Moltke's mobilization timetables were irreversible. An American President and Soviet General Secretary will understand that an irreversible action might, under only dimly imagined conditions, provoke the end of civilization.

C. Intensification of the Crystal Ball Effect: The Radical Divergence of Political and Military Calculi.

The nuclear crystal ball effect works on all of us, whether we are Presidents or ordinary citizens. We all see quite clearly that a major nuclear war is not worth fighting. But let us focus briefly on some specifically Presidential responses to the horror of an imagined shattered crystal ball. The President will, as we have seen, have to face the nuclear version of the basic dilemma of crisis management: To avoid a nuclear war (which will probably mean avoiding any substantial armed conflict with the Soviet Union), and also to protect or secure

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some interests held to be vital by the American government and the American people. As a nuclear crisis wears on, therefore, the crystal ball effect will intensify for the President. How should we understand the structure of some such intensification? In the analysis which follows in this section, I want to suggest that such a structure does indeed exist and that it provides for us a way of thinking about the evolution of feared nuclear inadvertence which yields a Presidential kind of sense. For a President's confrontation with an intensifying crystal ball effect is unlikely to be simply a matter of putting one's hands to the mouth and gasping "oh, my God; look what might happen if we do 'X'!" Now, a President may in fact do this. According to Robert Kennedy, the President did turn pale and did shudder visibly at the horrible possibilities he confronted.<sup>24</sup>

But by what process might a President arrive at this point? How might he arrive at the conclusion that any plausible scenario for nuclear war will be catastrophic? In short, how does a President think his way into the shattering of the crystal ball?

The missile crisis provides interesting clues. By approximately October 27, 1962, we have seen that the President and most of his key advisors believed that war was a finite number of moves away. But this meant that nuclear war was, in their judgment, only one or two (or three) steps beyond that. We know from McNamara's reported remarks in the EXCOMM meetings of October 27, and from Sorensen's discussion memo of ten days



earlier, that tremendous uncertainty existed regarding the immediate, inadvertent results of an American air strike against the Soviet missile bases in Cuba. Would one or more Soviet missiles be launched? Would Castro authorize an attack on the American mainland? Could he stop one from occurring? And so on, through the sorts of feared inadvertence they faced. But even if none of these fears actually materialized, there remained the great danger of the momentum of the crisis itself.

Richard Neustadt and Graham Allison have interpolated the President's thinking in those fateful moments in a way which emphasizes the remaining preoccupying concern: That, in fact, the superpowers would recapitulate the errors of July, 1914, and gradually squeeze one another into a war whose disastrous proportions were quite clear. What if the intensifying crystal ball effect were an insufficient deterrent to nuclear war in such a situation as leaders faced by October 27, 1962? This is how Neustadt and Allison imagine the President confronting this ghastly possibility:

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If the Russians held their course for a mere seventy-two hours, we would have to escalate a step, probably by bombing Cuban sites. In logic, they should then bomb Turkish sites. Then we..., then they...the third step is what evidently haunted Kennedy. If Khrushchev's capability to calculate and to control was something like his own, then neither's might suffice to guide them both through that third step without holocaust.<sup>25</sup>

By this time, therefore, the President-probably any President-would have had to progress through something like the following evolution of beliefs:

Nuclear first use is virtually impossible. ~~NO~~

Nuclear first use is improbable, but not impossible.

Nuclear first use is probable, if X, Y...

X or Y ...is increasingly probable.

Nuclear first use is increasingly probable.

If nuclear first use occurs, escalation to catastrophe is highly probable.

The key to understanding the horror with which a President gazes into his crystal ball in a nuclear crisis is the final belief: That nuclear first use leads almost inevitably to a catastrophic nuclear war, a war ironical in extremis, a war for which no supposed foreign policy objective could possibly be worth it. It is this belief which transforms the fear of nuclear inadvertence into the fear of participating in a process leading inadvertently to the end of the world.

How, by what means, would a President reach such a frightening conclusion? Figure 3 is meant to suggest some such process by which the President concludes that, as former Kennedy White House aide Arthur Schlesinger wrote recently, once a nuclear war begins in the midst of a deep superpower crisis, "the game is over."<sup>26</sup>



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Insert Figure 3 Here

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This graph represents the logical outcome of the point emphasized by Jervis, that the very essence of the nuclear revolution lies in the fact that neither superpower can defend itself against a nuclear attack from the other.<sup>27</sup> Thus, as a nuclear crisis deepens, traditional (that is, relative) notions of victory will be seen by a President not to apply at all to the present situation. As "victory," in relative military terms comes nearer, catastrophic damage will occur to the American homeland a President is elected to preserve and protect. Thus, as nuclear first use seems in the crystal ball to become ever more likely, so does nuclear catastrophe, because so few "exchanges" of nuclear detonations are required to produce a catastrophe which is, as McGeorge Bundy has said, "beyond history."<sup>28</sup> In fact, it will become clear that after a relatively "limited" nuclear war, military victory equals political catastrophe. Bundy calls this effect "the inverse calculus of gain and pain," according to which "whether the two sides exchange a few weapons or tens or hundreds, or more, the real loss to each will outweigh by orders of magnitude any 'gain' it may have aimed at in the exchange."<sup>29</sup> This effect is summarized in Figure 4.

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Insert Figure 4 Here

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A president, I believe, sees all this quite clearly in his intensifying crystal ball.

It is illuminating to dwell for a moment on the psychological implications of Bundy's emphasis on the President's grasp of "the real loss to each." For if we try to "thicken" our phenomenological description of psychological evolution in a nuclear crisis, we may notice some profoundly moral undertones in it.<sup>30</sup> A president, gazing into a nuclear crystal ball, notices an element of personal responsibility that others will not see. Or rather, they may see it and even be able to articulate it, but they will not feel it as profoundly because they will not feel as profoundly responsible for it, as the President.

As the full imagined force of the brute pain to be derived from a nuclear war confronted President Kennedy in October, 1962 he began, according to his brother Robert, to sound like a moral philosopher, trying to bring the possible destruction of millions of innocent people within the bounds of his moral categories. But he could not imagine any gain that might counterbalance such pain. Robert Kennedy's account of his brother's intense moral anguish on the final day of the missile crisis makes this clear:



The thought that disturbed him most, and that made the prospect of war much more fearful than it would otherwise have been, was the specter of the death of the children of this country and all the world - the young people who had no role, who had no say, who knew nothing even of the confrontation, but whose lives would be snuffed out like everyone else's. They would never have a chance to make a decision, to vote in an election, to run for office, to lead a revolution, to determine their own destinies.

Our generation had. But the great tragedy was that, if we erred, we erred not only for ourselves, our futures, hopes and countries, but for the lives, futures, hopes and countries of those who had never been given an opportunity to play a role, to vote aye or nay, to make themselves felt.

It was this that troubled him most, that gave him such pain.<sup>31</sup>

It might be objected that his was after all, the President's brother writing, and that such a statement ought to be disregarded as merely a self-serving attempt by RFK to place JFK in the best possible light. Is it really plausible, one might ask, that President Kennedy, the pugnacious, Irish-American cold warrior, would be most troubled by the thoughts and feelings his brother ascribes to him? I think it is indeed plausible, even highly probable. There are several reasons for believing this, one of the most important being the remarkable turnabout in the President's rhetoric and whole stance toward the Soviet Union following the missile crisis, a subject I take up toward the end

of the following chapter. The crisis shook him profoundly. But just as significantly, the plausibility of the passage is supported by some of the best recent thinking on the subject of nuclear ethics. Both Joseph Nye and Derek Parfit, for example, believe that the key to fulfilling our moral obligations in the nuclear age is to construct policies which maximize the probability that we can pass on to succeeding generations a range and quality of opportunities and possibilities at least equal to our own in their capacity for personal happiness and public fulfillment.<sup>32</sup> According to Robert Kennedy's memoir of the missile crisis, his brother's imagined, shattered crystal ball was so fearsome precisely because any nuclear holocaust, for which he would bear a good deal of responsibility, would prevent succeeding generations from enjoying the opportunities that were available to his own. Here is a quite remarkable case, I suggest, of the application of a philosophical principle occurring before the principle was even clearly stated. This may show just how deeply embedded in our nature would be our response to the situation faced by President Kennedy. He wanted most of all to do right by succeeding generations, a goal made increasingly improbable, in his view, as the likelihood of inadvertent nuclear war continued to rise.

But this is hardly to say that the phenomenology of these insights, by a President and by ethical philosophers, were anything like identical. What is different about a President's grasp of this moral maxim in a nuclear crisis is that he felt



it, felt responsible for violating it, should the crystal ball shatter to bits. Clifford Geertz gives us an idea of the sort of thing that happened to President Kennedy as he tried without success to fit an inadvertent nuclear war into his moral categories. The horror must have

arrive[d]...across a sequence of clashing imaginations and discomfited sensibilities...This is how anything imaginal grows in our minds, is transformed, socially transformed, from something we merely know to exist...somehow or other, to something which is properly ours.<sup>33</sup>

There is the key: The potential reality and responsibility for nuclear catastrophe became, for President Kennedy, properly his. He became directly and fully acquainted with it, in a way only one other leader - Nikita Khrushchev - ever has. When an inadvertent nuclear war became transformed for the President from an abstract possibility to a contingent probability, it also became something which he owned and it was therefore truly horrifying. Presidential counsel Theodore Sorensen once referred to the Cuban missile crisis as "the Gettysburg of the Cold War."<sup>34</sup> The analogy is an apt one in at least this respect: In his address at Gettysburg, Lincoln looked backward in horror and revulsion at the slaughter that had taken place there shortly before. His address is foremost an attempt to extract some justification, some meaning, from the bloodshed. But Kennedy looked foreward in horror and could not derive any

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justification from the inadvertent nuclear war that seemed ever more probable. Thus this "Gettysburg of the Cold War" was a Gettysburg of the mind only, the result of gazing into a Presidential crystal ball which, if shattered, would occasion no justificatory speeches, only speechless revulsion.

4. The Evolution of Situational Perversity.

John Kennedy has been the only American President to gaze into the nuclear crystal ball at a moment when there was a real danger of it shattering to bits. Only he, I believe, actually experienced the "new dimension of risk" noted by Neustadt; only he has faced the very real prospect of catastrophic damage to the United States as a consequence of some actions he might feel he had to undertake. Of course, he was not the first chief executive to express his revulsion at the prospect of using nuclear weapons. Both of Kennedy's Presidential predecessors in the nuclear age, Truman and Eisenhower, were far from enthusiastic about using nuclear weapons. It has been reported that Truman was greatly disturbed, for example, when he learned that most of those killed on August 6, 1945 at Hiroshima were civilians. On August 10, the day after the bombing of Nagasaki, he ordered that atomic bombing be stopped. Henry Wallace recorded in his diary that, to Truman, "the thought of wiping out another 100,000 people was too horrible." He just couldn't bring himself, so he said, to order more killing of "all those kids."<sup>35</sup> For his part, Eisenhower, when asked by his advisors

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to consider using nuclear weapons to prevent the fall of the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, said: "you boys must be crazy. We can't use those awful things against Asians for the second time in less than ten years. My God!"<sup>36</sup> It seems clear enough that the enormous and indiscriminant destructiveness of nuclear weapons impressed upon both Truman and <sup>NO</sup> Eisenhower the powerfully-held belief that nuclear weapons are not really weapons at all, but devices useful only for mass destruction. President Kennedy shared this view. Dean Rusk recently reported that once, after a briefing on American nuclear war plans, the President turned to him and said: "And they call us human beings."<sup>37</sup> With the possible (but not probable) exception of Richard Nixon, every President since John Kennedy has also shared this Presidential revulsion against using nuclear weapons.<sup>(38)</sup> <sup>NO</sup>

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This much being admitted about President Kennedy's continuity with his past and future Presidents of the nuclear age, it would still be quite misleading not to focus on the uniqueness of his situation in the missile crisis. As I noted, he was the first, and arguably the only, President to stare down what his aide Sorensen called "the gun barrel of nuclear war."<sup>39</sup> Those few autumn days in 1962 are still the only moments when the American people, homeland, and possibly the continued integrity of American society were seriously at nuclear risk. But perhaps even more importantly, we should not fail to notice the sort of risk it was: Risk of nuclear devastation brought on by some series of events no one could

accurately foresee, resulting in a war whose results would very probably constitute the worst catastrophe in world history.

Truman and Eisenhower had only to contemplate nuclear use against a non-nuclear and beaten enemy like Japan, or against other non-nuclear powers (the Soviets during the blockade of Berlin in 1948; or against China during the Korean War; or at Dien Bien Phu, or against China in the offshore islands conflict in 1958). Nuclear use depended upon cold-blooded, human calculation at the very highest levels. Nuclear retaliation was not a consideration. Neither was the danger of inadvertence, at least not nuclear inadvertence against oneself. But all this changed in the Cuban missile crisis in ways and to an extent that make it the greatest nuclear learning laboratory to date. In this case, the nuclear crystal ball appeared for the first time. It is important to see why the analogy is apt. For inherent in crystal ball gazing is the assumption that one's fate is out of one's control. If you believe you are in control of your situation, you don't need a crystal ball. But when control erodes, and especially when one has reason to expect the worst, we in those cases resort to gazing at crystal balls. So, whereas Truman could order the atomic bombing to stop, and Eisenhower could order the atomic bombing of Vietnam never to begin, and both could expect thereby to avoid nuclear war, Kennedy came to believe that his orders, and possibly Khrushchev's too, would be insufficient to avoid a nuclear war. When this began to occur during the missile crisis, the

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Thompson...



revulsion over nuclear first use had added to it a far more sinister specter: Fear of nuclear inadvertence. It was the fear, in effect, that the revulsion might not be enough to prevent the catastrophe.

Writing not long after the missile crisis, Thomas Schelling recognized that the situation faced by Kennedy and Khrushchev during the missile crisis was indeed new and quite unprecedented. In a nuclear crisis, Schelling noted, the competition between the superpowers was governed not so much by military gains and losses, but by what Schelling called "competition in risk-taking."<sup>40</sup> As he saw it, both the United States and the Soviet Union had during the missile crisis conducted its attempts at coercion in highly circuitous ways. The winner in any such future encounter, Schelling concluded, would be the leader and government that was readier to risk the mutual catastrophe neither side desired. By this yardstick, Schelling calculated that Kennedy had beaten Khrushchev; he had pushed the Soviets to the brink and they had backed off. As I will argue at length in the next chapter, I believe Schelling was extraordinarily prescient to seize upon the unprecedented, highly psychological character of the competition in the missile crisis but also that, due to his rational-actor psychological outlook, he was unable to incorporate into his analysis any sense of the look and feel of nuclear danger in such a situation as he described. What is missing from Schelling's otherwise brilliant account, in short, is the phenomenology of the competition in risk taking during a nuclear crisis.

But Schelling also noticed something else about the missile crisis that provides the clue to where to look for the missing phenomenology. Schelling saw that making what he called "threats which leave something to chance" has a peculiar and wholly inadvertent effect in the nuclear context: They are just as threatening to the threatener as they are to the side that is threatened.<sup>41</sup> In such a situation, Schelling wrote, the threat becomes "more impersonal, more 'external' to the participants; the threat becomes part of the environment rather than a test of will between two adversaries."<sup>42</sup> This is an extraordinarily important insight which has received insufficient attention, most notably from Schelling himself. For leaders who become viscerally aware of their total vulnerability to nuclear catastrophe, but who nevertheless feel compelled to apply force to an adversary in order to protect a vital interest, will eventually come to recognize that they are participating in the construction of a situation over which they are exerting progressively less control and which may eventually turn on them, like Frankenstein's monster, and destroy them. The phenomenology of such a situation, its look and feel, will be a perception of increasing perversity-of shortage of time, a shrinking list of safe options and the overpowering feeling of losing control.

On the final weekend of the missile crisis, both Khrushchev and Kennedy demonstrated that they were feeling the pressure of evolving situational perversity. On October 26, Khrushchev



wrote his famous "Friday letter" to the President arguing that both sides had by then become tied in a "knot of war," with both sides pulling, and the knot tightening until, said Khrushchev, one side or the other might eventually feel forced in desperation to cut it and to attack the other with nuclear weapons.<sup>43</sup> But this evolving situation, the evolving sense of loss of control and shrinkage of non-catastrophic options, is a direct psychological result of the phenomenon noted by Schelling: The adversary's migration to "the environment." In this situation, the fear of nuclear inadvertence becomes all-consuming: Fear of losing control oneself, fear of the adversary losing control, fear of the adversary's fear (of one's own fear, etc.). The situation, as Khrushchev clearly saw, becomes thoroughly perverse. The President, moreover, concurred publicly with Khrushchev's private assessment when he wrote to Khrushchev on October 28 welcoming his peace proposal as a message that had come just in time, because "developments were approaching a point where events could have become unmanageable."<sup>44</sup>

Figure 5 illustrates in a simplified way the evolution of situational perversity.

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Insert Figure 5 Here

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As a deep nuclear crisis evolves, risk of inadvertent nuclear war will seem to rise as pressure is applied (or resisted) to achieve whatever goal seemed vital enough to warrant entry into the crisis in the first place. Figure 5 illustrates why this is so: Because prediction and control of the situation appear to be evaporating. The situation that one is in will appear to resemble, in a real and dangerous sense, that which resulted from a famous social psychological experiment of some years ago. Stanford psychologist David Rosenhan had several of his students practice mimicking the responses of psychotics to standardized tests, so as to gain entry under false pretenses to mental institutions. The purpose was to determine to what extent the "insane" behavior typical of mental patients is actually a function of the way they are labeled and treated by the professional staff of these institutions. But once admitted to the hospitals, the students were instructed to resume "normal" behavior. The results were astonishing. Once labeled as crazy by the staff, virtually all the behavior of the students that was presumably normal was nevertheless responded to as if it were yet further evidence of the "patient's" pathology. Many participants in the exercise reported a feeling of perverse entrapment that they had never known before. No matter what they did or said, they were treated as if they were insane. The phenomenology of "being sane in an insane place," as Rosenhan called this phenomenon, was frightening. In effect, the pseudo-patients came to believe (correctly, it turns out)



that in this crazy, perverse world they found themselves in, they had totally lost control of their own lives and that it was virtually impossible to predict the results of even a simple request for food or toilet privileges.<sup>45</sup> This sense of being perfectly sane but of suddenly being entrapped in an insane place, of having an unpredictable enemy in one's immediate environment, and of being totally vulnerable to its apparent capriciousness seems also to characterize the perverse situation leaders find themselves in when facing the prospect of inadvertent nuclear war. They would have no doubt of the sanity of themselves or the adversary; but the nuclear environment that in normal times is calmly referred to as the means of deterrence, will appear to be losing its responsiveness to the deterrers. It will be as if it is going crazy.

ARMS RACE!

Thus one may doubt, for example, whether it was mere hyperbole, as some have claimed, that caused Robert Kennedy to claim that the shootdown of an American U2 reconnaissance plane over Cuba the morning of October 27, 1962 "was to change the whole course of events and alter history."<sup>46</sup> One did not know how to interpret such an event. Did the Soviet leaders order it? Did some faction or other, either among the Soviet or perhaps even the Cubans, do it to sabotage any chance for a peaceful settlement on American terms?<sup>47</sup> Was it just a mistake, like the mistaken American U2 overflight of Siberia on the same day? If Americans responded in kind, according to their own sense of "an eye for an eye," by bombing the SAM site responsible for the shootdown, how would that be interpreted? And so on.

Who asked?  
(at the time!)

To appreciate the power of situational perversity in a nuclear crisis, one needs to compare the reaction of the Kennedy Administration to the U2 shootdown and other, ostensibly similar incidents. On May day (May 1), 1960 an American U2 pilot was shot down over Soviet Territory and Khrushchev used this as a pretext for stalking out of his scheduled Paris summit with President Eisenhower. It was an ugly affair, with recriminations all round.<sup>48</sup> In early September, 1983 a Korean Air Lines passenger plane was shot down over Soviet territory, killing over 200 people, including more than 60 Americans. Once again, rhetoric escalated, charges and counter-charges were made, and the Soviets were eventually prevented from landing their Aeroflot aircraft at many airports in the West.<sup>49</sup> But just the opposite happened during the missile crisis. One downed plane, one American serviceman killed (the only one to die as a direct result of the missile crisis), and the heads of state of the two superpowers moved straight to a settlement of their immediate differences. Whereas in 1960 and 1983, the superpowers used the occasion of a shootdown to heat up the cold war a bit, in 1962 they seemed to see it as a harbinger of catastrophe to come. The difference in the behavior is explained psychologically by the presence in 1962 of the widespread and powerful perception that the situation had grown too unmanageable, too perverse, to allow an escalation even of rhetoric. This is why the American government perceived the U2 shootdown over Cuba to be the watershed of the missile crisis:

No!

Wow!

Wow!

leading to  
JFK  
ult., not  
concessions  
a reversal!

\* Talk about demi!  
(B)



Because, if one last attempt were not made to regain control of the perverse situation they were in, it could have led to their (and our) Waterloo.

As I have noted, and as is well known, it is often said in retrospect that the evolution of situational perversity during the missile crisis was an aberration, merely a function of having an oddly panicky group of men in the White House at the time. I have already noted the perplexity of General Maxwell Taylor, chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff and a key member of President Kennedy's EXCOMM during the missile crisis. This view seems to have been widespread throughout the military at the time. Air Force chief Curtis LeMay, for example, reportedly flew into a rage when he learned that the Chiefs' recommendation - to bomb the missile site responsible for the shootdown the very next day - had been rejected by the President.<sup>50</sup> But not only military men believed this. Dean Acheson, Secretary of State under Truman and a special consultant to Kennedy's EXCOMM, said after the crisis that "as long as we had the thumb screw on Khrushchev, we should have given it another turn every day."<sup>51</sup> And former Vice-President (and of course, future President) Nixon wrote in 1964 that by not bombing the missile sites, invading Cuba and throwing out the Communists the Kennedy Administration had "enabled the United States to pull defeat out of the jaws of victory."<sup>52</sup> These and many others believe that only the "flap in the White House" prevented a proper American response to all sorts of Soviet effrontery during the missile crisis, the most egregious

being, of course, the killing of an American serviceman flying an unarmed reconnaissance plane. In short, all these individuals believe the President and his advisors were simply irrational to panic when, in fact, the Soviets had no options, if the Americans had decided to play their trump card and use their military power in the region to overwhelm the missile sites and, ultimately, the Cuban regime of Fidel Castro.

But notice that such assessments as these rest upon assumptions that are the inverse of those held by the President and his key advisors. In short, they believed the environment, not themselves, was going "crazy." They were perfectly sane, so they believed, but their environment was becoming progressively insane. To these leaders, as they groped in the dark, hour by hour, the danger of inadvertent nuclear war became palpable and real, not at all a mere "flap" of irrationality. The danger was, in fact, not imagined, but real, and regarded as such, because they had created it by trying to force the Soviets to remove their nuclear missiles from Cuba. What they did not count on, what seems to have startled leaders on both sides, was the speed and intensity with which the ogre of inadvertence reared its head. They had indeed set out to play something like the sort of game Schelling calls "competition in risk-taking."

In the end the Kennedy Administration learned something profound. At its outset, the point of the crisis they had willingly entered was simply to remove the Soviet threat from



Cuba by force. This was stated forcefully by the President in his concluding remarks to the first meeting of his EXCOMM on October 16:

I don't think we got much time on these missiles. They may be...so it may be that we just have to, we can't wait two weeks while we're getting ready to, to roll. Maybe just have to take them out, and continue our other preparations if we decide to do that. That may be where we end up. I think we ought to, beginning right now, be preparing to...because that's what we're going to do anyway. We're certainly going to do number one; we're going to take out these, uh, missiles. Uh, questions will be whether, which, what I would describe as number two, which would be a general air strike. That we're not ready to say, but we should be in preparation for it. The third is the, is the, uh, the general invasion. At least we're going to do number one...<sup>53</sup>

In other words, the day the President received word that Soviet missiles were in Cuba, he seems to have had no doubt that they had to be bombed, and bombed as soon as possible. But at the height of the crisis, on October 27, the President resisted tremendous pressure from his military advisors and from some civilians too to bomb just one Soviet missile site. The situation had, in his view, grown too perverse to permit it. He told Arthur Schlesinger on the morning after the crisis had ended that he was afraid people would draw all the wrong

*< It was not his reluctance that ended (won) the crisis. It was the threat he subjected for the attack. (Thank God! However,*

conclusions from the missile crisis, especially that if you just hung tough with the Russians, they would give in.<sup>54</sup> To him, this would misrepresent what actually had happened. In fact, both sides felt mightily squeezed and both sides had to compromise - Khrushchev withdrew the missiles, Kennedy promised to leave Castro alone and to remove American missiles from Turkey (the later being a private pledge, made through his brother Robert to Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin on October 27). This, as he saw it, was the ultimate act of sanity in an insane place.

necessary?  
effective?

Like so many aspects of an evolving nuclear crisis, the evolution of situational perversity has an important moral dimension. In fact, the situation the leaders of the Superpowers believed they were fast approaching by October 27, 1962 is a perfect example of what the ethical philosopher Thomas Nagel has called a "moral blind alley." Nagel asks:

What if the world itself, or someone else's actions, could face a previously innocent person with a choice between morally abominable\* courses of action, and leave him no way to escape with his honor?... Given the limitations on human action, it is naive to suppose that there is a solution to every moral problem with which the world can face us.<sup>55</sup>

The immediate impetus for Nagel's question was the situation American soldiers found themselves in at My Lai, when they were ordered to kill the women and children of the village. Is this not an example, Nagel asks, of a "moral blind alley," devoid of acceptable options? What does one do when one is a soldier,

NO!

For  
Christ  
sake!

\* e.g. retreat

\* = murder, job



taught to follow the orders of his superiors, when one is asked to do something so revolting, so repugnant to one's moral sensibilities, that one cannot under any circumstances regard it as acceptable? What does one do when the situation presents you with these options: Kill the innocent or be killed for <sup>NO!</sup> insubordination? This, Nagel suggests, is the fundamental moral <sup>(not minimal to be morally expected, again)</sup> problem of war and massacre.

This is also, I believe, very much like the situation facing superpower leaders in a deep nuclear crisis. As they look down the road a move or two, or three, they see a situation so perverse as to seem to lead inexorably, by one inadvertent path or another, to massacre - to indiscriminant nuclear war. They imagine with ease, perhaps also with accuracy, an environment that is so insane, so perverse, that it may permit no option other than nuclear war. This is, I believe, what President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev saw in their nuclear crystal balls that final weekend in October, 1962. What they saw then we all see now: "A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." But only those men, and their closest associates, knew (and know) what that situation felt like, moving forward, uncertain of the outcome. Unlike the soldiers of My Lai, leaders in October 1962 pulled up short of massacre, short of giving into the perversity around them. Psychologically, they had travelled an immense distance in less than two weeks. Morally, they had been shaken to the core. None of this can be understood, I think, without placing the fear of inadvertent

NO

nuclear war at the heart of one's explanation. So if we are to comprehend the events of October, 1962, we must see that fear and learning in a nuclear crisis represent cause and effect. But to understand why this is so, we must make an effort to get vicariously deeper than is customary into the look and feel of nuclear danger during those two weeks.



VII. AMERICAN ULTIMATUM OR STATEMENT OF FACT?: THE ROLE OF  
FEARED NUCLEAR INADVERTENCE IN THE RESOLUTION OF THE  
CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS

If in this situation he did not behave falsely towards possibility, if he did not attempt to walk around the dread which would save him, then he received everything back again.

Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, 1844

The explanation of the Cuban missile crisis is an industry unto itself. Why was it resolved as it was: Quickly, peacefully, unexpectedly, over the final weekend in October, 1962? This is very far from what the Kennedy Administration evidently believed would happen, as they entered into the crisis after discovering the Soviet missiles in Cuba. On October 22, in his televised speech to the nation, the President had warned that "this is a difficult and dangerous effort on which we have set out. No one can foresee what course it will take or what costs or casualties will be incurred. Many months of sacrifice and self-discipline lie ahead...months in which many threats and denunciations will keep us aware of our dangers."<sup>1</sup> None of this happened. The acute period of crisis ended less than a week after the President's speech was given; the sacrifice consisted of one death, Maj. Rudolf Anderson, shot down on a reconnaissance mission over Cuba; and the crisis ended without even the expectable Cold War recriminations from either side. In fact, the resolution of the missile crisis marked the end of the most dangerous phase of the Cold War. No wonder this event,

so potentially dangerous, and with a resolution that seemed so totally unexpected, has been the subject of more explanations, from more participants, scholars and journalists, than any event of the post-war era.

One senses that even now, a quarter century after the event, many of the key participants in the missile crisis are still perplexed by the way it transpired and the way it was resolved. Writing shortly after the crisis, Presidential Counsel Theodore Sorensen invoked an analogy that reveals a great deal. "Just as missiles are incomparably faster than all their predecessors," he said, "so this world-wide crisis had ended incredibly faster than all its predecessors."<sup>2</sup> That it was a missile of a crisis, no one can doubt. But why? EXCOMM member and Under-Secretary of State George Ball recently confided in his memoirs that as time elapses, he has experienced more, rather than less, difficulty writing about the missile crisis. He reports being stymied by a bewildering array of theories and angles meant to explain the event.<sup>3</sup> This pervasive sense of the essence of the crisis having eluded its participants was illustrated recently by a remark made by McGeorge Bundy, President Kennedy's National Security Advisor. It came in the context of a videotaped discussion of the missile crisis during which excerpts were played from President Kennedy's speech of October 22, 1962. Bundy said, after listening to the President ask the American people to prepare for months of sacrifice: "I had forgotten that we all thought the thing was going to last



for a very long time."<sup>4</sup> Few, if any, of the American managers of the crisis expected the episode, as Sorensen later said, to become the diplomatic mirror image of the ballistic missiles that provided the focal point of the crisis.

I want to make and develop three central points in this chapter: First, I want to formalize an argument that has been percolating in all the preceding material, namely, that it was fear of inadvertent nuclear war that caused this crisis, which most anticipated would be long and perhaps bloody to turn out to be short and scary, but peaceful. Second, I want, in light of these considerations of the nature and role of feared nuclear inadvertence, to re-examine the act which brought the missile crisis to its unexpectedly rapid and conciliatory conclusion: Robert Kennedy's conversation with Anatoli Dobrynin on the evening of October 27, 1962, in which he conveyed to the Soviets the final offer from the Americans. Finally, I want to try to look a bit more deeply than is customary into the psychological life of leaders on that final evening of the crisis. It seems to me that something occurred during those tense hours which is psychologically far more profound than is generally realized, even by the participants themselves. In the title of his moving and eloquent memoirs, EXCOMM member George Ball has articulated the problem that needs addressing as we try to understand, finally, what made the missile crisis so unusual, so unexpected in so many of its dimensions, so very much like a missile of a

X  
by K!  
NOT JFK,  
who did  
not respond  
deciding to  
this fear!  
(However,  
further is not  
no reason

crisis rather than, so to speak, the bomber that had been anticipated. Ball's title, The Past Has Another Pattern, derives from T.S.Eliot's "The Dry Salvages":

It seems, as one becomes older,  
that the past has another pattern, and ceases to be a mere  
sequence or even development: the latter a partial fallacy,  
encouraged by superficial notions of evolution, which  
becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the  
past..

We had the experience but missed the meaning,...<sup>5</sup>

I believe that, with one or two exceptions, the multitudinous explanations of the resolution of the missile crisis have indeed "missed the meaning" by "disowning the past," a past - a brief but critical weekend of the past - dominated by the fear of inadvertent nuclear war.

This past as we now tend to think of it, a couple of weeks of very high stakes poker and a culminating hand during which the Soviet bluff was called, is a past that has been reconstructed by analysts and participants alike, according to one or another patterns which are more consistent with received academic wisdom or simply less frightening to recall than the way events actually seemed to be transpiring at the time. I hope it is abundantly clear, moreover, that this observation - that, looking backward, "the past has another pattern" from the confused and often fearful chaos which constitutes the daily crawl of life - is meant to be something other than an



accusation, a potshot at what might be taken to be a bunch of would-be nuclear crisis heroes discussing a famous victory. Far from it. The reconstruction of the past so as to drain it of its fearful content is every bit as adaptive an act as responsiveness to fear itself - it is an attempt to bring our experience within the bounds of our understanding. In this sense, as Eliot (and Ball) suggest, we are all of us all of the time having the experience but missing the meaning. But in the case of the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis, the standard accounts are so discrepant with ordinary common sense, and this discrepancy is so heavy with implications for our understanding of how nuclear war is to be avoided in a nuclear crisis, that in my view it is more than worth the effort to take a few, somewhat halting steps in the direction of recapturing the meaning of those darkest hours of "Black Saturday," as some have called it, when it seemed as if war was imminent, and of the following Sunday morning when leaders (and the whole world) woke with utter astonishment to learn that this most acute and dangerous phase of the most dangerous confrontation of the nuclear age was over. I hope that by restoring even a small part of the meaning - what the fear was about and what it was like to be fearful in that context - we will better understand why Robert Kennedy conveyed his frightening message on the evening of October 27, why the members of EXCOMM were so pessimistic about its chances for success, why it did succeed and, finally, why so many of them appear to have received the news of Khrushchev's acceptance with disbelief, yielding slowly to giddy relief and delight.

By October 27, the missile crisis had ground on publicly for nearly a week following President Kennedy's televised speech on October 22, in which he announced that a naval quarantine of Cuba would go into effect immediately and would remain in place until the Soviet government agreed to remove all offensive nuclear missiles from Cuba. In fact, the quarantine had not been successful. Soviet ships bound for Cuba had halted on October 24, just before reaching the quarantine line, and those ships that had been allowed to pass through were carrying only cargo not proscribed by the President's orders. In spite of this, the Soviets continued their round-the-clock uncrating and assembling of the missiles, under the close surveillance of American reconnaissance planes. By October 27, the missiles were deemed by American intelligence to be either ready for possible launching, or only a few days from the point of readiness.

But the quarantine was, in effect, only the tip of the iceberg of the Kennedy Administration military efforts to compel the Soviets to remove their missiles. For the quarantine was regarded as only the initial step which would be taken. If the Soviets did not relent, then an air strike, probably followed by an invasion, were planned as well. In a report to Secretary McNamara, dated February 13, 1963, Adam Yarmolinsky summarized the preparedness of the U.S. Army invasion force this way: "The Army forces which were alerted, brought up to strength in personnel and equipment, moved, prepared to execute the Cuban operation, were a part of the largest U.S. invasion force



prepared since World War II. The remainder of Army units were prepared to carry out any other assigned missions, such as the reinforcement of Europe."<sup>6</sup> Slightly hidden in this statement was a very great fear of many EXCOMM members: That if the United States actually bombed and invaded Cuba, the Soviets would move against West Berlin. Thus, the movement of troops for "the reinforcement of Europe." It was quite clear, in other words, that the anticipated action against Cuba would have worldwide consequences.

No where were the consequences of the American military alert more obvious and ominous than in the preparations for possible nuclear war within the Strategic Air Command (SAC). Soon after the President's speech on October 22, SAC was placed, for the first and only time, at Defense Condition (DEFCON) 2. Scott Sagan has summarized what this meant in operational terms:

1. Battle staffs were placed on 24-hour alert duty.
2. All leaves cancelled and personnel recalled.
3. 183 B-47 bombers were dispersed to 33 preselected civilian and military airfields.
4. The B-52 airborne alert training program was expanded so that 1/8th of the force was airborne in a continuous series of 24-hour flights with an immediate replacement for every bomber that landed. Fifty-seven bombers and 61 tankers were airborne. Forty-nine of the B-52s, with 182 nuclear weapons on board, were on station, ready for execution orders.

5. Additional B-52 and B-47 bombers and tankers were placed on enhanced ground runway alert. The ground alert force totaled 672 bombers and 381 tankers, with a total of 1627 nuclear weapons on board.

6. Ninety Atlas and 46 Titan ICBMs were placed at a heightened state of readiness.<sup>7</sup>

All this occurred immediately following the President's speech of October 22. Later in the week, however, probably on either October 25 or 26, the Commander in Chief of SAC (CINCSAC), Gen. Thomas S. Power, was ordered to turn up the heat on the Soviets even further. Sagan has summarized the brutal numbers inherent in that order: "Within 24 hours of that alert order," he has calculated, "SAC was expected to have 172 missiles and 1200 bombers with 2858 weapons on alert. The aggregate destructive power available in this SAC - generated force alone in October 1962 was over 6000 megatons - higher than the entire American strategic arsenal today."<sup>8</sup> This was only a part of the huge, hidden bulk of the American military iceberg, only the tip of which was noticeable to the general public - the President, his press secretary and the arena that during this intense week got the lion's share of television coverage, debates in the United Nations between American Ambassador Adlai Stevenson and Soviet Ambassador Valerian Zorin.<sup>9</sup> The Soviets, for their part, reciprocated though only to a point. Yarmolinsky reported to Secretary McNamara after the crisis that the Soviets, like the Americans, had canceled military leaves and that "an advanced state of alert was established" within the military forces of



the Warsaw Pact and the Red Army itself. He also reported, however, that American intelligence sources reported nothing resembling the full-scale nuclear alert under which the American armed services had been placed by October 27.<sup>92</sup> In light only of these few facts, perhaps it is clear that when one speaks of a unique and overpowering sense of nuclear danger in the Cuban missile crisis, one is not just engaging in romanticizing, if that is the correct term, the situation leaders faced - because they created it - in October, 1962. There was an operational basis for believing that the world was poised on the brink of inadvertent holocaust. With hundreds of bombers aloft, with hundreds of missiles ready to launch, with thousands of megatons ready to be unleashed if the order came down, on the American side, and with dozens of Soviet nuclear missiles and bombers ready for their missions only 90 miles from the American homeland, there were objective reasons for the fear of nuclear inadvertence.

Within this worldwide context of dizzying nuclear danger, ominous events began to occur on October 27. A new Soviet ship was reported to be approaching the quarantine line. Intelligence and photo-reconnaissance revealed that work on the Soviet missile sites had been, if anything, speeded up. Some nuclear warhead storage bunkers were now spotted going up. Then came the two events that seem to have become symbolic for the leaders of what lay ahead. First came news of the shootdown of the unarmed U2 reconnaissance plane over Cuba and the death of its pilot. I have already indicated in the previous chapter why we ought not scoff at Robert Kennedy's claim that the downing of

the U2 was "to change the whole course of events and alter history."<sup>10</sup>

Then came the news that an American piloting a U2 had made a navigational error, overflowed Siberia and drawn a host of Soviet fighters (but no fire) before returning safely back to its base in Alaska. This incident, or rather the American and Soviet reactions to it, illustrates better than any other the effect of the look and feel of nuclear danger on the American and Soviet leaders during the missile crisis. Accidental overflights occur with great frequency and, as a rule, little or nothing is made of them beyond the local level where the overflight has occurred. But when word of the overflight reached Secretary McNamara on October 27 during a meeting with the Joint Chiefs, according to Lt. Gen. David A. Burchinal McNamara "turned absolutely white, and yelled hysterically, 'this means war with the Soviet Union.'"<sup>11</sup> Why would McNamara fear this, if only momentarily? According to Sorensen, because members of the EXCOMM believed such an overflight might convince the Soviets that the United States was beginning to survey Soviet airbases in preparation for a preemptive nuclear attack, perhaps initiating, on the Soviet side, an urge for a damage - limiting preemptive attack of its own.<sup>12</sup> And Khrushchev did wonder about it aloud in his October 28 letter to Kennedy: "How should we regard this?" he asked. "What is this, a provocation? One of your planes violates our frontier during this anxious time we are all experiencing, when everything has been put into combat readiness."<sup>13</sup> Such were the heightened sensitivities in both



leaderships. Both sides were quite ready to fight a conventional war of some sort; and the United States was overtly ready to launch a nuclear war. By "ready", I do not mean to imply that anyone surrounding the President desired either to occur. But as war-readiness was heightened and as incidents began to occur which seemed to be harbingers of far more dangerous episodes to come, it becomes obvious that, in a sense, the readiness itself was becoming a large problem, perhaps the central problem. How many more shootdowns or overflights, or rumors of such, could occur before retaliation occurred, unleashing the military forces of each superpower, forces very close to the shorthand term then in use for Defense Condition (DEFCON) one: "Cocked pistol."<sup>14</sup> On DEFCON "Zero", so to speak, the pistol would be fired. As Khrushchev wrote to Kennedy on October 26: "What that would mean I need not explain to you." But he said it anyway: It would be "dooming the world to thermonuclear catastrophe."<sup>15</sup>

Theodore Sorensen has captured with great poignance the look and feel of nuclear danger in the EXCOMM on October 27, as the group stared at the ghastly possibility that events were about to overtake them and defeat their best efforts to get the missiles removed without a war. At a meeting that evening tempers had flared and the President had had to adjourn his advisors until calmer heads prevailed. Here is what the situation looked like to Sorensen and his colleagues the evening

of October 27:

Everything was in control readiness on both sides. The conventional and the nuclear forces of the United States were alerted worldwide. Both air-strike planes and the largest invasion force mounted since World War II were massed in Florida. Our little group seated around the Cabinet table in continuous session that Saturday felt nuclear war to be closer on that day than at any time in the nuclear age. If the Soviet ship continued coming, if the SAMs continued firing, if the missile crews continued working and if Khrushchev continued insisting on concessions with a gun at our head, then - we all believed - the Soviets must want a war and war would be unavoidable.<sup>16</sup>

President himself later told Sorensen that he believed on October 27 that the odds that the Soviets would go all the way to war - with its vastly raised likelihood of nuclear war - was "somewhere between one out of three and even."<sup>17</sup> These Presidential odds have been much discussed and often discounted as "irrational" or as mere "hyperbole."<sup>18</sup> But the evidence suggests that the President and his inner circle of advisors were indeed deeply fearful on "Black Saturday" that war, perhaps nuclear war, was only days away. This appears to have been the frightening phenomenology of the situation. And in light of what lay behind Sorensen's remark that "everything was in combat readiness on both sides," a strong argument can be made which supports the President's odds and Sorensen's fears.



In the early evening of October 27 the President sent his brother Robert to convey to Ambassador Dobrynin, thence to Khrushchev, what would be the final American offer: That the missiles should be removed from Cuba in exchange for a public American pledge not to invade Cuba and a private assurance that, sometime shortly after the crisis was resolved, a group of (obsolete) Jupiter missiles in Turkey under official NATO custody would be quietly removed. These terms had, in general been proposed by Khrushchev in his two letters to the President of October 26 and 27. The principle difference between what Khrushchev said he required (in the letter of October 27) and what Kennedy proposed was that there could be no "deal", at least none publicly agreed to, in which Soviet missiles in Cuba were "traded" for American missiles in Turkey. The American government was willing to give a private assurance that the Turkish missiles would be withdrawn, but would deny any such pledge had ever been given if the Soviets should try to go public with the American offer. This was the content of Robert Kennedy's message to Dobrynin. On the surface, looking back at the event with benefit of hindsight, one might guess that the American government would be both optimistic about the chances that their offer would be accepted and also that the crest of the crisis had passed. Many analysts, looking back at Robert Kennedy's message with disbelief, can scarcely believe that, in fact, the opposite seemed at the time to be true. The Americans were very pessimistic about Khrushchev's response to their offer; and many felt that, far from reaching an accord based on

BIG!

This is a  
negotiation  
of the  
27 Oct 16  
proposal

NO

WHO?! Refs?

another  
"problem"  
for JGB  
to explain

Look how K's reaction was perceived, by SO + the world.  
as a total defeat!

their offer, they were instead about to enter an utterly unprecedented phase of nuclear danger. Sorensen reports that he did not believe they would succeed and that McNamara was so pessimistic that he decided to stay up much of that night drawing up American options (short of) invasion. CIA Director John McCone was equally pessimistic.<sup>19</sup> So, according to Robert Kennedy, were the President and himself. "The President was not optimistic, nor was I," he recalled. "He ordered twenty-four troop-carrier squadrons of the Air Force Reserve to active duty. They would be necessary for an invasion."<sup>20</sup>

The situation seemed very desperate, very close to the outbreak of war. Robert Kennedy recounts in his memoir of the missile crisis just how desperate the President and his advisors believed the situation had become. He recalls telling Dobrynin this:

We had to have a commitment by tomorrow that those bases would be removed. I was not giving them an ultimatum but a statement of fact. He should understand that if they did not remove those bases, we would remove them. President Kennedy had great respect for the Ambassador's country and the courage of its people. Perhaps his country might find it necessary to take retaliatory action; but before that was over, there would be not only dead Americans but dead Russians as well...Time was running out. We had only a few more hours - we needed an answer immediately from the Soviet Union. I said we must have it the next day.<sup>21</sup>



After suspicions about Soviet intentions in Cuba reaching back many months, after the discovery of offensive missile sites on October 15, after a week of intense secret discussions between President Kennedy and a carefully selected group of advisors, after the carefully calibrated political and military maneuvering of the preceding week, and after proposing to the Soviets resolution almost <sup>NO</sup> (but not quite) identical to one they had proposed previously, this is what the Cuban missile crisis came down to: The Soviets were given 24 hours to agree to this absolutely final American offer or else be plunged into the very first shooting war ever between the nuclear superpowers.

ULT.

But why, in the view of the President and his advisors, had it come to this? Why the hurry? As we saw in the previous chapter, the attitudes and expectations of the men in the White House have mystified <sup>USAF/Admission</sup> many critics because the so-called "flap in the White House" - their allegedly irrational fear of nuclear war - prevented the United States from doing what, in their view, ought to have been done right away: Bomb the missile sites, invade the island and throw out Castro's government. Men as different <sup>and as private</sup> as General Maxwell Taylor, General Curtis Lemay, Dean Acheson and Richard Nixon all held this view. For these critics, the American "ultimatum", as they like to think of it, was far too little and much too late. But at least as much uproar has occurred within the large group of those who have felt that Robert Kennedy's "ultimatum" of October 27 was needlessly unequivocal and hasty. In fact, I believe these

yes -  
but hurry  
to win,  
not to  
"not/gut"

people are asking an important question. Even McGeorge Bundy, for example, is troubled by the frenzied pace and panicky prognostication of the final weekend of the missile crisis.<sup>22</sup> "Why the hurry?" strikes him as a very important and revealing question. *(So which JGB has a good answer).*

Unfortunately, the answers which are generally given to this question are reductively psychological, suggesting that the President and his circle of advisors either needlessly lost their composure or that the forcing of the crisis to what they regard as a premature conclusion is evidence of some deep psychopathology in the President and perhaps in his advisors as well. Much of this amateur psychologizing is scathing on the point of the Turkish missiles. Why, the critics ask, didn't the President simply yield to the "fair" Soviet request to trade a missile for a missile, so to speak? Adlai Stevenson was sympathetic to this view during the crisis. But the President was not, and the critics of Robert <sup>JFK's!</sup> Kennedy's ultimatum have been harsh. Garry Wills, for example, sees it as evidence of the President's desire "to rub Khrushchev's nose in the dirt." *No. "to lead to"* According to Wills, "Kennedy would even risk nuclear war rather than admit that a trade of useless missiles near each other's countries was eminently fair."<sup>23</sup> But perhaps the most scathing attack on the President, one that inadvertently illustrates the poverty of typical "on-the-couch" psychological accounts of the Robert Kennedy message of October 27, comes from Bruce Miroff.

Wills,  
JGB?



According to Miroff:

Talk of gradual, step-by-step escalation was abandoned; Kennedy was within two days of plunging into the most dangerous conflict the world would ever witness. This extraordinary haste has never been satisfactorily explained...There is no more telling commentary on Kennedy's "crisis mentality" than this preparation for apocalypse on the eve of the crisis resolution...At the height of the crisis, he abdicated control over the outbreak of hostilities to Khrushchev's sense of restraint. This was hardly the stuff of political greatness; in the final analysis, Kennedy's conduct in the missile crisis was neither responsible nor justifiable.<sup>24</sup> *yes*

According to this account Kennedy, in firm control of the crisis situation, chose to raise the ante needlessly at the last minute, just because, due to the American military preponderance around Cuba and at the strategic nuclear level, he thought he could get away with it. That he did "get away with it," in this view, does not justify the needless risk of forcing, via his brother's message to Dobrynin, a premature conclusion to the crisis. *I make a "Mc Def" justification of JFK doing this (absolutely control), not "needless"*

But this view is no more in contact with the psychological reality of a nuclear crisis than its mirror image - the view that the Americans could safely have bombed and invaded Cuba any time, without any danger, but for the irrational "flap in the White House." Neither of these views take Robert Kennedy's account at all seriously when he says that he went to Dobrynin bearing not "an ultimatum but a statement of fact." Notice the kind of grossly improbable assumptions that are required to

*\* otherwise he "would have been informed" etc.*

sustain this sort of misreading of the evolving psychological life in the crisis, as well as the President's motives and his brother's account. Miroff claims the President "abdicated control" over how and when war would break out. But this requires us to believe that by the evening of October 27, with 125,000 troops poised in Florida to invade Cuba, with Castro declaring that he would order his forces (who controlled anti-aircraft batteries around the missile sites) to shoot down everything in sight, with one U2 already destroyed and its unarmed pilot killed by a Soviet SAM missile, with the Siberian overflight fresh in his mind, with the anti-submarine activity around the quarantine line becoming overly aggressive, with a group of advisors demonstrably at wits and tempers end, with the knowledge that over 8,000 nuclear weapons were ready to be used momentarily and - most significantly perhaps - with the suspicion that Khrushchev faced analogous difficulties - with all this facing him, we are asked to step into the President's shoes on October 27 and pronounce ourselves firmly in control of the situation. Only some such fantasy as this can justify the claim that the President and his advisors, by giving Khrushchev 24 hours to "take it or leave it," had willfully "abdicated control" over the situation. This requires us to believe an absurdity: That human actions such as a President must take, do not involve the fear of unintended consequences of those actions - of inadvertence. It requires us, in effect, to believe that it is not a President under scrutiny, but a God.

*further  
abdicated*

*\* K backed off, in similar situation*



But VGB is forgetting the earlier question - Why not  
quickly script the lot, offer? He might have done

-155- *the whole lot (see B letter); but he  
didn't know this would run out; control*

In fact, this kind of criticism is very common, for all its psychological absurdity. I think this is so primarily because its advocates fail to distinguish between (what amounts to) a "God's Eye" view of human action, viewed backward from nowhere in particular with benefit of knowing the outcome, and the viewpoint of the experiencing person, in this case the American President. This is, in other words, an example of what we encountered earlier as "the psychologist's fallacy": Mistaking the perspective of the analyst for the perspective of the analyzed. This is absolutely not to say that the alternative to committing the psychologist's fallacy is to justify the behavior of the actors under analysis. But it is to hold unequivocally that one should ask these questions before rushing to judgment: Why did the actors in a given instance believe they had to act as they did? What is the situation they believed they faced? What is the likelihood that anyone faced with that situation would have believed, and thus acted similarly? If we do not ask these questions, if we make little or no attempt to enter the fine grain of the psychological reality of the lived experience, then our conclusions will necessarily be derived mainly as deductions from some preconceived theory. One can see this psychologically naive approach at work over and over again in interpretations of Robert Kennedy's pivotal (so-called) "ultimatum." From the right-leaning critics comes the following

*had been  
lost, by  
both  
(given his  
ult.!)*

11

deduction:

Most politicians are afraid of using military force.

President Kennedy (and his civilian advisors) were politicians.

Therefore: President Kennedy was afraid to use force in the missile crisis, even though ( as Gen. Curtis LeMay said) the Soviet response would have been "nothing."<sup>25</sup> The President was "chicken."

*Bent on right!*

And from the left:

Many politicians are obsessed with power. President Kennedy was a politician who was particularly obsessed with power.

Therefore: President Kennedy used a degree of force and pressure to end the missile crisis which was completely unnecessary. The President was "macho".

*(not to achieve his goal;*

What these explanations have in common is their commitment to apriori theories or ideologies and their blithe disregard for the look and feel of the situation the actor thought he was in.

*but wot small interests!*

In other words, rather than attempting intentional explanations

*NO*

of action first, these explainer jump to a mode of deductive explanation typical of physical science. But in physics, attempts are first made to get the facts straight. In

interpreting the Robert Kennedy message of October 27, therefore, we ought to get our psychological facts - the psychological context in which the message was delivered - straight before proceeding to further analysis and evaluation.

But this, of course, is exactly what is lacking: An attempt to get into the look and feel of nuclear danger to a small group of men in the White House on October 27, 1962.



Diverse and incompatible though many such explanations obviously are, we should not fail to notice a significant psychological feature they all share: They are all highly cognitive, almost completely devoid of any significant causal attribution to the role of fear in the conduct and outcome of the missile crisis. To this extent they also share the essential feature of Schelling's early and influential interpretation of the missile crisis and, in so doing, they demonstrate that the rational - irrational actor framework, given its most sophisticated voice by Schelling, has shaped the character and limits of debate - not only about the missile crisis but about all issues relating to nuclear deterrence. Writing in 1966, Schelling argued that "The Cuban crisis .. should be construed as an actual instance of the new species...the competition in risk-taking, a military-diplomatic maneuver with or without military engagement but with the outcome determined more by the manipulation of risk than by an actual contest of force."<sup>26</sup> Nearly all explanations of the resolution of the missile crisis take Schelling's principle for granted: The crisis was resolved because one side or the other (or both) were forced to fold their hands when the betting got too heavy for them. Those who praise the President and his advisors for their performance (including many advisors themselves) express admiration for his failing to fold under pressure. Critics who disapprove of the behavior of the Kennedy Administration's way of resolving the crisis argue that the risk of nuclear holocaust was raised to a level much higher than was

Right wing  
does!  
(Both are  
right?)

prudent or moral or that due to cowardice or lack of competence, they failed to raise the stakes to a level commensurate with the overwhelming superiority of their hand. In all these instances, the explanations confront one another completely within a set of psychological ground rules established, in a more or less formal way, by Schelling. The missile crisis is viewed as a test of nerve, bearing more than a passing resemblance to high-stakes poker. Once seen in this light, one's evaluation of actions taken to resolve it is determined by how close (or far) is the psychological distance between whatever action in October, 1962 one deems rational, and the degree of irrationality attributed to the actual actors and actions they took. Moreover, if Schelling's psychological ground rules are adhered to, as they almost always are, many of the actions taken by the Kennedy Administration can be made to fit a coherent pattern of more or less rational "competition in risk-taking."

It is simply remarkable, however, how drastically the actual evolving psychological life of the missile crisis departs from the rational-irrational actor psychological framework. One cannot, I think, plausibly go so far as to claim that "competition in risk-taking," this nuclear mind-game, had nothing to do with the conduct of the missile crisis. It did, especially at first. There can be no doubt that the discovery of the missiles in Cuba initially occasioned a good deal of thought and discussion of a pokerish sort, especially of what came to be regarded as the central array of options for removing them - which Gen. Maxwell Taylor referred to picturesquely in

*For JFK,  
to the  
end!*



order of his own preference as "shoot'em out," (air strike and invasion), "squeeze'em out" (naval quarantine) or "talk'em out" (purely diplomatic route).<sup>27</sup> Yet by October 26-27, the two days and nights during which the resolution occurred, there is almost no evidence suggesting that political leaders believed they were either in control of their situation or that they believed it resembled poker in any interesting sense. There is a wealth of data, moreover, demonstrating just the opposite: That by that weekend all concerned had become deeply fearful *not?* that the nuclear crystal ball was about to shatter inadvertently, but catastrophically. As I have just tried to demonstrate, once even a modest attempt is made to step backward into the forward flowing psychological life of that pivotal weekend, and examine just a few of the factors which led to a greatly heightened sensitivity to inadvertence, it is easy to see and feel why the fear of nuclear inadvertence was so pronounced.

What is not so immediately easy to understand, however, is why so many obvious facts and so many passionate memoirs and interviews pointing to the significance of feared nuclear inadvertence have failed to make a conceptual dent in the standard psychological wisdom regarding the missile crisis. With fear of inadvertent nuclear war so obvious, pervasive and palpable in the evidence, why has debate about the resolution of the missile crisis continued on its merry, rational/irrational path, seemingly oblivious to its psychological reality? I want to discuss three sorts of reasons, all of them important contributors to the rationalization/irrationalization of the

missile crisis but one of them, the third, particularly helpful in understanding why so many of the key participants themselves are so deeply ambivalent about the role of feared nuclear inadvertence in this most intense experience of their lives of public service.

First, of course, neither the experience of fear nor the possibility of inadvertence fits well with the paradigmatic rational actor psychology whose framework, if not anymore all of its conclusions, totally dominates discussions of nuclear deterrence. In part, this could be regarded as a criticism. The rational actor psychology has proved to be not only remarkable durable, but also remarkably rigid and resistant to the changing requirements of avoiding nuclear war. But we should also recall that the work done in the 1950s by Schelling and his fellow travelers from economics and game theory was emphatically not formulated to help us come to grips with actual psychological evolution in crises, but was rather created as a set of techniques useful for computing the cognitive conditions under which a putatively rational actor might decide to attack with nuclear weapons. Writing after the missile crisis in 1966, Schelling noticed that this episode was different from past encounters, and in two respects: The psychological focus of the actors seemed at some point to shift onto the "environment", as he called it, wherein the danger of war really lay; and the bargaining that Schelling imagined to have taken place was far more abstract than is typically the case, involving the manipulation of risk more than of armies and navies.<sup>28</sup>



Curiously, however, Schelling's at first insight, which emphasizes the psychological reality of nuclear inadvertence deriving not from human intention but from the "environment," seems to have had almost no impact either on Schelling's subsequent work or on anyone else's. At the same time, the second insight, regarding what he took to be "competition in risk - taking" at the nuclear level, has become something like the first conceptual commandment for anyone wanting to be taken seriously by the community of policy analysts, political scientists game-theorists and economists who dominate discussion of nuclear strategy.

It is worth noting that each of Schelling's insights has a radically different psychological character. The imputation of enhanced psychological reality to the "environment," to fear of inadvertence, is an invitation to try to re-live the experience of having one's adversary in a nuclear crisis migrate from a person, government and nation to something very nebulous, very discomfoting and highly resistant to rational analysis. In fact, I believe Schelling's insight is truly revolutionary, for if he (or others) had followed it up they would eventually have had to conclude that in a nuclear crisis, a psychological shift occurs in the participants of such profundity that the old method of analysis - determining the extent of rationality of a given action - fails any longer to apply. Particularly radical would have been the methodological implications of focussing, like the participants, on the nuclear "environment" apparently teeming with potential occasions of nuclear inadvertence. Such

an analysis would have required a phenomenological investigation of the forward - moving psychological life of a nuclear crisis, emphasizing the salience of feared inadvertence. But instead Schelling, and the entire nuclear policy community with him, seized upon the second insight, one which points toward more refined after-the-fact attribution of rationality/irrationality in a situation - a nuclear crisis - which, psychologically speaking, will appear a bit more abstract than normal but not deviating in any way across the boundaries of rational analysis. In effect, Schelling's first insight would, if noticed, believed and applied by nuclear policy analysts, have led them to conclude that something truly unprecedented psychologically had occurred in the resolution of the missile crisis, something that would have also led them to see that the nuclear revolution in weaponry did in that instance lead to a psychological revolution on the part of the central participants in the crisis, and which ought therefore to lead to an analytical revolution in our attempts to comprehend how best to avoid a nuclear war. The second insight, the one which has become the paradigmatic framework for discussion of the missile crisis and nuclear policy generally, merely required that analysts shift their search for rational and irrational actors onto a more abstract yardstick. And this is exactly what happened: The conservative road was taken; the missile crisis, despite reams of relevant psychological data to the contrary, became just another crisis; and deterrence of a nuclear surprise attack and deterrence of nuclear war in a nuclear crisis came to



be regarded as differing only in details, not in psychological substance. Given the conservative nature of defense planning, intellectual communities and professional organizations, it is not hard to see why the conservative path was taken. Yet when this happened, I believe, the psychological reality of the missile crisis was discarded, as was the profundity of the turning point it represented in the history of the nuclear age.

Yet if the ubiquity and significance of feared nuclear inadvertence in the missile crisis has gone unnoticed by overly-deductive analysts, it must be admitted that the participants themselves have also played important roles in this conspiracy of nuclear silence. This brings us to the second powerful reason for the analytical anonymity of the fear of inadvertent nuclear war in discussions of the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis: Almost every fiber in our nature rebels against the idea that our lives need not have evolved as they did, that chance and happenstance are pivotal and, most of all, that we ourselves fell into this circumstance or that out of fear of the unknown. When we try to account for the circumstances of our lives, we give it a meaning, coherence and a rationality in the telling that it never had in the living. As George Ball has admitted, borrowing from T.S.Eliot, "the past has another pattern," one it has not when it is lived forward - when it is the elusive present - but only when it is truly the past, and we have the luxury of viewing it as a series of snapshots, each scene leading naturally, as in a well-told

shame?  
dread?  
(me/  
not  
decided?  
survivor

as JCS still seen JFK  
as "rational."

story, into the next. In his recent volume of poems called simply The Past, Galway Kinnell suggests the most significant class of omissions from our tales of our own pasts:

To de-animalize human mentality, to purge it of obsolete evolutionary characteristics, in particular of death, death foreknowledge terrorizes the contents of skulls with, is the fundamental project of technology...<sup>29</sup>

Freud and generations of depth psychologists would concur: Of all the tricks played by memory, the most pervasive and necessary is the way we expunge fear - especially fear of death - from our mental landscape. Freud in fact was one of the first modern psychologists to make Kinnell's point, that we require a kind of technology, a set of rules for remembering (or constructing) our fearless victories and forgetting the terror of the unknown - the dark, when we are youngsters, or indeed nuclear inadvertence when we are/were not so young.<sup>30</sup> All of which is to say that it would be surprising, indeed it would be startling, if the managers of the missile crisis had recalled the event primarily as one in which, toward the eventual resolution, fear of the unknown had dominated their thoughts and feelings. The predictable interpretation would be one emphasizing one's mastery of difficult circumstances - the triumph of reason in a situation in which one conceivably could have, but thankfully did not, give in to fear. In other words, human nature alone would dictate pretty much what one finds in many memoirs of the missile crisis: A forthright, sometimes quite poignant evocation of feared nuclear inadvertence, but

JKK  
did not  
(except in  
details!)

JCS did  
not! at  
all! (DE)



little or no indication that the former participant (now the author) believes fear of inadvertent nuclear war is at all causally related to the resolution of the missile crisis. Thus human nature, like the conservative nature of organized intellectual life, helps to account for why fear of inadvertent nuclear war, apparently so powerful and pervasive in the missile crisis, is analytically almost invisible, a ghost in the rather pat and mechanical explanations of its resolution. This also helps to account for the almost unanimous agreement among analysts and participants-become-analysts that what Robert Kennedy delivered to Anatoli Dobrynin the evening of October 27, 1962 was actually an ultimatum, not a statement of fact. For an ultimatum would have been delivered by the chosen representative of a government in firm control of its situation. A statement of fact, in this awesome context, would have been the forthright admission that control was believed to be rapidly evaporating, a process leading to consequences everyone should fear to the depths of their ability to feel.

For US,  
it was  
not.

because  
JFK  
shamefully  
ignored it  
in his report

of  
course

NO

not inconsistent; it was both.

All of this amounts, after all, to very little, if any, evidence that feared nuclear inadvertence actually was causally related to the resolution of the missile crisis. One can easily admit that intellectual organization is inherently conservative and that human nature is fundamentally defensive, without establishing a basis for believing that feared nuclear inadvertence was salient in this instance, that the psychological evolution during the missile crisis was revolutionary or, certainly, that we ought to re-think our

yes!!  
see  
189

to JFK

\* (Actually, it did get JFK to overcome his  
reluctance to issue an ultimatum.

understanding of avoiding nuclear war. Feared nuclear  
 inadvertence might still be held to be epiphenomenal by anyone  
 who <sup>OR ACCEPTS!</sup> resists what I take to be conclusive proof that, as the  
 final weekend of the missile crisis approached, the  
 psychological <sup>all?</sup> life of the managers was shot through with fear of  
 the consequences of losing control. In fact, as long as we  
 choose to ignore the evident psychological reality of the  
conclusion of the missile crisis we will never be impressed by  
 my line of argument. It will always be possible to interpret  
 the events, after the fact, as evidence of either rationality or  
 irrationality on the part of the actors. I have tried to  
 suggest why this approach commits the psychologist's fallacy, by  
 mistaking the psychological life of the backward-looking  
 analysts for that of the forward-looking analyzed. The danger,  
 in other words, is that by allowing the organizational inertia  
 of the community of analysts and the expectable human nature of  
 participants to distract them from the psychological reality of  
 a nuclear crisis, the results of these all-too-frequent analyses  
 may apply to an imaginary, cognitively-reconstructed crisis (and  
 crises), but not at all to the resolution of the missile crisis  
 or to any future nuclear crisis.

But not  
 the  
 response!!

But I believe there is a third reason why the fear of  
 nuclear inadvertence is so ghostly a presence in the nuclear  
 debate, and especially in the analyses made of the crisis by  
 most of its central actors. This reason has little to do with  
organizational inertia or human defensiveness, and everything to  
 do with the full, revolutionary psychological implications of



the Cuban missile crisis as it must have been lived forward. In brief, it is this: The deep ambivalence with which feared nuclear inadvertence is regarded by most key participants in the missile crisis derives from their having had to confront a situation so unexpected, so profound in its implications and so unsettling, that they have been left in a kind of intellectual limbo, not able to disown their fears, but also unable to integrate them in any constructive way into their understanding of why the missile crisis turned out the way it did: *Why K - and not the (McN! McG! JFK!) books down!* Peacefully. For the first and only time, people really believed they were on the brink of nuclear catastrophe and that, if it came, it would do so in spite of the deepest wishes and intentions of all concerned with the management of the crisis. In a sense, they are living, self-conscious exemplars of Kierkegaard's uncertainty principle: That life must always be lived forward but understood backward. So they fully expected, I believe, that the crisis would explode into war and some of them clearly believed this would mean nuclear war. This is how the situation appeared, moving forward, further and further into a set of circumstances they could scarcely name, let alone squarely face. But it didn't explode, There was no war at all, and I don't believe many of the participants, or hardly any of their analysts, understand why the expected inadvertent catastrophe never occurred. Because of the depth of the fear and the kind of fear they felt as the missile crisis reached its climax, and because of having reached a peaceful resolution after actually believing they had lost functional control of the

situation, the participants, I think, remain deeply confused and troubled. A part of them knows full well that a statement of fact was indeed delivered from Robert Kennedy to Dobrynin. But a part of them cannot make sense of the outcome without also believing that it was an ultimatum. They cannot - indeed who could? - accept that fear of inadvertence was rampant and also that the crisis remained peaceful. For this would seem to indicate that they were just lucky. They have no way of causally connecting the fear of inadvertent nuclear war with avoiding all war in the missile crisis.

NO -  
RUSK  
REFUTES  
THIS!  
(to Bha)

and  
shamefully  
reckless.

As to the ambivalence regarding feared nuclear inadvertence: It is deep and pervasive within and among the participants. Here are some illustrations of the way most of the central actors have split off their fear from their analysis of the resolution of the crisis:

Robert McNamara

The fear: ...the sun was setting, in October and I, at least, was so uncertain as to whether the Soviets would accept [our offer] ...that I wondered if I'd ever see another Saturday sunset like that...that may sound over-dramatic, but that was the way I was feeling at the time. It was that serious a problem. That was Saturday night [October 27, 1962].<sup>31</sup>

The resolution: We confronted the Soviet Union with nuclear war over the issue of the offensive weapons [in Cuba] and forced them to remove the offensive weapons



rather than engaging in nuclear war.<sup>32</sup>

Arthur Schlesinger (for JFK)

The fear: Recalling one's own tumult of emotion,...I would say, one lobe of the brain had to recognize the ghastly possibility, another found it quite inconceivable...Kennedy's grim odds were based on fear, not of Khrushchev's intention, but of human error, of something going terribly wrong down the line...Even with the justified assumption of reciprocal rationality, a terrible risk remained.<sup>33</sup>

The resolution: "There are fewer higher gratifications," Dr. Johnston once said, "than that of reflection on surmounted evils." Kennedy was well satisfied by the performance of his government. The Executive Committee had proved a brilliant instrument of consideration and coordination. He was particularly proud of his brother, always balanced, never rattled, his eye fixed on the ultimate as well as on the immediate...As a whole, the government could hardly have performed better.<sup>34</sup>

Nikita Khrushchev

The fear: I do not know whether you can understand me and believe me. But I wish you would believe yourself and agree that one should not give way to one's passions; that one should be master of them. And

what direction are events taking now? If you begin stopping vessels it would be piracy, as you yourself know...then we would be forced to take the necessary measures of a defensive nature which would protect our interests...why do this? What would it all lead to?...If people do not display wisdom, they will eventually reach the point where they will clash, like blind moles, and then mutual annihilation will commence...Mr. President, I appeal to you...<sup>35</sup>

The Resolution: The Americans knew that if Russian blood were shed in Cuba, American blood would surely be shed in Germany. The American government was anxious to avoid such a development. It had been to say the least, an interesting and challenging situation. The two most powerful nations of the world had squared off against each other, each with its finger on the button. You'd have thought that war was inevitable...  
[The crisis was] an episode of world history in which, bringing the world to the brink of atomic war, we won a socialist Cuba...We achieved, I would say, a spectacular success without having to fire a single shot.<sup>36</sup>

I have already noted Theodore Sorensen's remark that the members of the EXCOMM on October 27 "felt nuclear war to be closer on that day than at any time in the nuclear age."<sup>37</sup> In



fact Sorensen's writing on the missile crisis is the most ambivalent of all toward the fear of inadvertent nuclear war. No one has been more effective at reconstructing the vast uncertainties the EXCOMM faced and the way these uncertainties led to fears of a quite unprecedented sort. At the same time, there has been no stronger advocate than Sorensen for the thesis that the missile crisis was resolved as it was because one man - the President - was in total control throughout, that he applied just exactly the proper amount of pressure at the proper time, and thus that he achieved unquestionably the greatest victory of the nuclear age. Nowhere in the literature of the missile crisis do we find such clear and compelling arguments for the salience and irrelevance of feared nuclear inadvertence. In his biography of President Kennedy, Sorensen conveys on consecutive pages his memory of the way he felt when he learned that the crisis was resolved - disbelief - and his analysis of the resolution - brought about by the control and almost superhuman rationality of the President. "y back"

Theodore Sorensen

The reaction to the resolution:

Upon awakening Sunday morning, October 28, I turned on the news on my bedside radio, as I had each morning during the week. In the course of the 9A.M. broadcast a special bulletin came in from Moscow. It was a new letter from Khrushchev, his fifth since Tuesday, sent publicly in the interest of speed. Kennedy's terms were being

accepted. The missiles were being withdrawn. Inspection would be permitted. The confrontation was over.

Hardly able to believe it, I reached Bundy at the White House. It was true...it was a beautiful Sunday morning in Washington in every way.

With deep feelings of relief and exhilaration, we gathered in the cabinet room at eleven, our thirteenth consecutive day of close collaboration. Just as missiles are incomparably faster than all their predecessors, so this world-wide crisis had ended incredibly faster than all its predecessors.<sup>38</sup>

#### The explanation of the resolution

John Kennedy entered and we all stood up. He had, as Harold MacMillan would later say, earned his place in history by this one act alone. He had been engaged in a personal as well as national contest for world leadership and he had won... the hard lessons of the first Cuban crisis [the Bay of Pigs] were applied in his steady handling of the second with a carefully measured combination of defense, diplomacy and dialogue...caution and precision with which he had determined for thirteen days exactly how much pressure to apply.<sup>39</sup>

*the lead was...  
the gamble.*

Much has been made of the allegedly self-serving nature of explanations such as Sorensen's, which attribute this "finest hour" of the Kennedy Presidency to the superior intelligence and cleverness of President Kennedy.<sup>40</sup> But to cast them aside as merely self-aggrandizing is also, I believe, to miss a great



deal about the psychological reality of the last weekend of the acute phase of the Cuban missile crisis. In particular, these attempts to pooh-pooh explanations emphasizing courage, brilliance and above all rational planning and calculation, show just how far some of these critics are from appreciating what those men went through in thirteen days. I think that if we try to re-enter at least some of the key moments during the crisis we discover that time and again they were surprised and confused by the course events had taken. By the final weekend, thoroughly confused by their demonstrable inability to predict and control the course the crisis seemed to be taking, and greatly fearful of the war - perhaps nuclear war - at least some of them believed was about to occur, they received the startling news, so utterly unexpected that the irascible and incorrigibly belligerent Khrushchev had agreed to their terms. Moreover, so anxious was Khrushchev to convey to the Americans his enthusiasm for American terms that he had broadcast his letter over the radio to assure quick and accurate transmission of his message. This, I think, was the final straw of confusion for the EXCOMM. For while they were overjoyed, they could make little sense of what had happened. None, so far as I know, had been confident that Khrushchev would agree to their terms. <sup>as usually</sup> But he had. To explain it they, like anyone surrounded by anomalous events, attributed the resolution to the sorts of qualities that had always been required when good triumphed over evil. Their's were "profiles in courage," to transpose the title of President

JCS?  
Taylor?

Kennedy's famous book onto the resolution of the missile crisis. There is no reason to suspect they did not believe this. After all, what were the explanatory options available to them? Fear of inadvertent nuclear war fell by the wayside, something perhaps to be regretted and overcome, but not itself any important part of the cause of the resolution. The experience of living the crisis forward gave way to backward-glancing explanations.

The experiences themselves are of course gone forever. Neither participants in the missile crisis nor anyone else can ever unearth them for, in fact, the mind is not like the earth and remembering is not at all like removing dirt to reveal treasure chests preserved in tact across the years. Memory is far too constructive for that. We remember by constructive narratives which make sense and which conform to whatever we take to be the relevant and demonstrable facts of the matter.<sup>41</sup>

This means that any attempt at the recovery of the psychological life during the pivotal weekend of the missile crisis must remain at a fairly general level, and that we must turn for help to analogies to the missile crisis. In fact, this is done all the time. The paradigmatic analogy is that of a game. The missile crisis, according to this view, is like poker, chess or "prisoner's dilemma." This much being generally agreed upon in the community of nuclear policy analysts, the individual observers make their points. But this analogy won't



do if we seek deeper entry into the look and feel of nuclear danger during the missile crisis. The participants certainly did not believe they were in anything like a game. In fact, I recall vividly being present recently at a heated exchange between Robert McNamara and a former high-level official in the Nixon Administration who is now a senior foreign policy analyst. The analyst asked McNamara if he agreed that, after all, the missile crisis was "just a game of chicken" and that it had been resolved on October 28, 1962 because Khrushchev "chickened out." McNamara stared at his interlocutor, eyes wide, unspeaking for a very long moment until he exploded: "It was not a game and there were no 'chickens'." That's not the way it was." Moreover, McGeorge Bundy has recently written that he is sure that the missile crisis represents for all the participants the most intense and profound experience of their public lives.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, it is only by completely ignoring the evolving psychological reality of the missile crisis that one can treat it as a game. To men who, as Sorensen writes, feared they were closer to nuclear war than at any moment of the nuclear age, the missile crisis seemed like something other than a game. Whatever insights may be derived from game analogies are gotten only by annihilating the psychological life of the crisis.

But see  
WWR/mel  
last morning

But if it wasn't like a game, what must it have been like? Specifically, are there any analogies to the missile crisis which might help us account for why feared nuclear advertence,

so central to the experience, is so absent from the explanations of the episode? Can analogies help us to articulate an intentional explanation of the resolution of the missile crisis and, at the same time, account for why the actual participants have been unable to do so? I believe that the answer to all these questions is "yes", and that the proper intentional analogies to the missile crisis are so obvious that one has only to pose the intentional question to discover the answer. We ask: What, in general, must the missile crisis have been like? The answer, I suggest, so obvious but also so fruitful, is this: Living through the look and feel of nuclear danger in the missile crisis would be like living through other sorts of crises. That is, we would expect the structure of evolving psychological life in the missile crisis to display many of the same characteristics we find in other sorts of crises - classes of events about which a good deal is known, psychologically. Thus, I want in concluding this chapter to look briefly at three sorts crises, each of which sheds a slightly different angle of light on the psychological life of the managers of the missile crisis. These are: Scientific crises, medical crises and personal crises. My treatment is far from systematic. I mean only to suggest that if we begin by focussing on the missile crisis, we may reach some insights and conclusions about it that will be psychologically real to its participants, discrepant from many of their own explanations of it and thus, perhaps, catalysts to learning some lessons from the episode that derive from the experience of having lived through it.



In his work on scientific crises and scientific revolutions, Thomas S. Kuhn has taught an entire generation of scholars a new way of thinking about shifts in thinking about the world.

Although Kuhn, a physicist, draws most of his own data from physics, his vocabulary and his framework - anomaly, paradigm, revolution and so on - have proven to be applicable to any enterprise in which people must come to grips with some part of the world which (or who) behaves in ways that one would not have predicted. Kuhn's work provides above all else a framework and nomenclature for understanding the structure of psychological life when expectations clash violently with observed facts.

surprises  
puzzles

When this happens in science and elsewhere, according to Kuhn, when a prediction about which one cares deeply turns out not to be confirmed, then we enter a state of crisis. Now, one could agree that this is all well and good in science but that foreign policy making is hardly a science. True enough; it is not.

Science is a much more detached, ethereal activity than foreign policy-making. But one should not, Kuhn emphasizes, over-draw the difference between science and ordinary life. The more we learn about scientists, the more we discover that they are human beings. In short, they tend to fall in love with their theories and to be crushed when their data are discrepant from them.

Kuhn recalls, for example, a remark of Nobel laureate Wolfgang Pauli who, in the mid 1920s, became thoroughly frustrated by his inability to grasp the latest developments in physics. He wrote to a friend: "At the moment physics is again terribly confused.

In any case it is too difficult for me, and I wish I had been a movie comedian or something of the sort and had never heard of physics."<sup>43</sup> Thus the physicist finds himself in a state of crisis, brought on by the failure of the world to conform to his predictions.

Importantly for purposes of the analogy between scientific crises and the missile crisis, many scientific crises do not begin with actual experiments but with a procedure available to anyone: Thought experiments. Let us place ourselves vicariously in the shoes of the members of President Kennedy's EXCOMM during the thirteen days of the acute phase of the missile crisis, and carry out what must have been the most significant thought experiments undertaken by them during the crisis. What we find, I believe, is that from the beginning of the crisis to the conclusion, we are faced with anomalies - with failed predictions. Here in outline are five of the most perplexing and significant:

1. October 16: Soviet offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba. No one in the EXCOMM other than CIA Director John McCone predicted this. As Robert Kennedy recalled the very first EXCOMM meeting on October 16, "the dominant feeling at the meeting was one of stunned surprise."<sup>44</sup> They had, they believed, been absolutely clear that such weapons would never be permitted; the Soviets would never dare do such a thing. But they did. The crisis was launched when they examined the anomalous but incontrovertible data the morning of October 16.

*Under-estimation of "Intention"*  
*(not possible; like*  
*5:1 on A-bomb)*  
*"Commitment..."*  
*see Review of Policy: gradual (Cuba)*

*Summary;*  
*Con-*  
*patient*  
*(Unaffected)*  
*pregnancy*



2. October 23: No Soviet counter-move to the U.S. quarantine

After President's speech the previous evening, almost everyone had gone to bed expecting a very significant Soviet escalation of the crisis overnight. Perhaps, it was guessed, the Soviets would block the autobahn between West Germany and West Berlin; perhaps they would bomb the Turkish missile bases; perhaps they would begin to move troops through the Dardenelles. But they did nothing. On the morning of October 23, Dean Rusk found George Ball asleep on the couch in his office at the State Department. In waking him Rusk said: "We have won a considerable victory. You and I are still alive."<sup>45</sup> All in the EXCOMM were perplexed by the lack of Soviet counter-move.

3. October 24: Rise of the Crystal Ball Effect.

At 10:00 AM on October 24, the quarantine went into effect. Soviet ships were sailing toward it with a submarine escort. Fears escalated rapidly in the EXCOMM that some sort of untoward incident at sea would inadvertently spark the war all wanted to avoid. Robert Kennedy recalls that in those moments he wondered: "Was the world on the brink of a holocaust? Was it our error? A mistake?"<sup>46</sup> But again, anomaly prevailed. Nothing happened. The Soviet ships stopped dead in the water, reversed course and headed back to the Soviet Union.

*What was going on in Kremlin?!*

4. October 27: The Evolution of Situational Perversity.

No one in the EXCOMM, I believe, expected the events of this day: The U2 shootdown and overflight, the second, less hopeful letter from Khrushchev, the presence of a large convoy of Soviet ships steaming toward the

*\* No pull-back, (see K. failure to hold back after JFK threats).*

quarantine line, and the announcement from Castro that his forces would try to shoot down every American plane in sight. No one expected at the outset of the day that by evening they would have given the Soviets <sup>48</sup> 24 hours to agree to American terms or else. No one expected to feel by evening that they would be, as Sorensen recalled, closer to nuclear war than at any other moment in the nuclear age. *Who knew of RFK ult.?*

5. October 28: The peaceful resolution of the crisis. No one predicted it. Some were already drawing up contingency plans for whatever the next move was to be, following Khrushchev's expected refusal of their terms. Then the message came through Sunday morning over the radio. Few, if any, could believe it.

The course of the crisis had thus seen five very critical thought experiments fail, five predictions disconfirmed, five sources of profound confusion emerge. The President and his advisors had expected no missile crisis, had expected the Soviets to repond belligerently once the crisis had begun, had expected inadvertent war on the high seas, had not expected events suddenly to appear to go careening out of control and had not, finally, expected their "final" offer, conveyed by Robert Kennedy to the Soviet Ambassador, to be accepted. Every one of their most critical predictions had been disconfirmed. Thus one might with some justice describe the psychological evolution of these men during the missile crisis as the evolution of deepening fear of inadvertent nuclear war, certainly, but also the evolution of even more profound confusion. Cause and

*Good*



effect, our handles on reality, had quite suddenly seemed to have become detached from events. Episodes came and went, but who knew why?

It is in fact just such situations that have interested Thomas Kuhn. It is important, according to Kuhn, that we understand that thought experiments of profound significance - such as those conducted by the members of the EXCOMM - have four very distinct stages: The prediction, the anomalous results, the crisis, and the all-important response to the crisis - the new or old explanation. In situations in which the expectations of the thought-experimentors are very deeply embedded in powerfully held beliefs, and when those expectations are not met, the seeds are sown for a psychological revolution - a new way of understanding the world which comports with the new data and which, importantly, thereby transforms anomalies into expectable occurrences. According to Kuhn:

A crisis induced by the failure of expectation and followed by revolution is at the heart of the thought-experimental situation...Thought experiment is one of the essential analytic tools which are deployed during crises and which then help to promote basic conceptual reform...Full confusion came only in the thought-experimental situation and then it came as a prelude to its cure...the thought experiment informed our subjects what was wrong. That first clear view of the misfit between experience and implicit expectation provided the clues necessary to set the situation right.<sup>47</sup>

I think this is an accurate, if quite general and somewhat overly - intellectualized discription of the structure of the revolution in thinking during the missile crisis that almost, but didn't quite, occur. Participants were awash in anomalies; everyone was aware that a deep crisis was upon them. In particular, no one expected the two features of the crisis that seem to have astonished the participants the most: The rise of the crystal ball effect, with its concomitant heightened fear of inadvertent nuclear war, on the one hand and, on the other, the sudden and seemingly inexplicable resolution. These occurred on consecutive days, after having reached, in Kuhn's term, "full confusion" due to "the misfit between experience and implicit expectation." But the participants did not, could not, connect these two central constituents of their confusion. \* Thus while the final weekend of the missile crisis was certainly revolutionary in the sense that nothing like it had ever happened before, the explanations of the event were not revolutionary. Rather, they were, one might say, epistemogically conservative. The rise of the crystal ball effect, the raging fear of inadvertent nuclear war and the sudden and quite unexpectedly peaceful resolution of the missile crisis has been "explained," or really explained away by the participants as simply anomalies. They just do not seem to fit into their causal explanations of the event. In this way, I believe, many of the participants in the missile crisis, even those who recall vividly their rising fear of inadvertent nuclear war, have felt obliged to annihilate their own psychological

given  
writing  
(despite  
confusion  
"You've  
won!"  
(like hell)  
- being  
them (?)

on SV  
will?

\* When does JGB count then?  
What is his evidence? His argument, books?



life during the missile crisis. They can make no explanatory sense of it. In some such way as this, I believe, many of the participants who have had the experience have also nonetheless missed the meaning of it. That is why I believe that most of them still regard the mortal fear of nuclear inadvertence as something to be suppressed and overcome, rather than the heart and soul of nuclear crisis resolution. The missile crisis, they would (and do) argue, was resolved in spite of fear and trembling in the face of nuclear danger, rather than because of it. \* This has important consequences for our present thinking about nuclear policy, a subject I take up in the last chapter.

JGB has  
it wrong!  
for the:  
He denies  
what the  
did:  
fear  
+ threat  
despite  
fear  
and  
pressure

The analogy between scientific crises and the missile crisis may help us to understand why the key participants in the missile crisis have felt obliged, for the most part, to split off their remembrance of feared nuclear inadvertence from their explanations of the resolution on October 28. They were profoundly confused, even somewhat disoriented perhaps, by what must have seemed like the evolution of a political-military environment growing progressively crazy, unbound by the standard structures of predictable cause and effect. I see no reason to believe that anyone in that situation could have been immune to that confusion and disorientation, and thus to pronounced conservatism in explaining its outcome. They were groping in the dark. In fact, I am inclined myself to marvel and admire the profundity of their confusion and to admire their sensitivity to the unique requirements of the situation they

Because  
the  
action  
was  
split!  
(not  
K's!)

\* We should note!

faced. Beginning on October 16 from, as McGeorge Bundy has said, a "standing start" the men in the EXCOMM underwent a rapid and tumultuous barrage of unexpected and deeply troubling events and fears of even worse occurrences. That they have been unable satisfactorily to integrate their evolving psychological reality into a plausible account of the crisis is no surprise. But what is more than a little surprising, I think, is that in a matter of a few days these men - and Khrushchev certainly must be included in this category - were able to respond so creatively and adaptively\* to a set of fears they never expected to have and which, I think it is quite clear, they still do not fully understand. They had the wisdom and courage to forsake their preconceived ideas about how to manage a nuclear crisis in practice, even though their various retrospective theories about the effects of those actions remain pretty unconvincing, simply because they omit the very core of the psychological reality they faced: Fear of inadvertent nuclear war. And it was (and is) vastly more important for the peace of the world that these men in fact "had the experience," to re-invoke yet again George Ball's favorite passage from Eliot, than that they may have "missed the meaning." The meaning is for all of us to puzzle out.

But while it is true that the analogy between scientific crises and a nuclear crisis may shed some light on the cognitive side of evolving psychological life during the missile crisis, it does not, I think, even begin to allow us to appreciate the

(1)  
NO  
NO: IC  
(see Castro on JFK courage in Cuba, etc.)  
He thought P was a coward.

"They look good only because K was 'creative and adaptive' (if you disown LBJ's belief (DE!): 'He had to back down.' But for him to have,



extent and implications of its intensity. The missile crisis, we must always keep in mind, provided not only the "full confusion" noted by Thomas Khun in his remarks on scientists; it also provoked tremendous fear. The crisis was unexpected, meteoric, short, dangerous and fearful. Robert McNamara recalls wondering if he would live out the week following October 27. George Ball remembers his wife, Ruth, stocking their basement with canned goods, to be used in the event of a Soviet nuclear strike on Washington.<sup>48</sup> And Robert Kennedy wondered if they weren't on the very brink of a world-wide nuclear holocaust. Such intensity and gravity as this is not only uncharacteristic of science, it scarcely resembles everyday life either. This is so simply because life is not lived by most people as if one were in the midst of a crisis. A crisis, as we characteristically use the term, connotes a state of mind and a situation which differs qualitatively from the normal course of affairs.

One such state with which we are all at least somewhat familiar, one that by its usual definition connotes great danger, discomfort and fear, is a medical crisis. In the history of medicine, a "crisis" came to refer to a critical moment in the progress of an illness, often connected with a feverish, scarcely coherent state. The core of the medical crisis is the point beyond which, it is believed, a patient will soon become demonstrably better and ultimately recover, or will instead rapidly deteriorate and die. It is the point at which

the fever will either "break," or overwhelm the patient, leading to death. Here then is an analogy to a nuclear crisis which, though not exactly common in the lives of most people, is nonetheless one with which we are all familiar as a situation and state of mind which are very frightening. Let us consider briefly whether, in looking at the psychological life characteristic of medical crises, we can shed some light on the way fear of inadvertent nuclear war might operate in the psychological lives of the managers of the missile crisis. Let us ask: What can we learn by analogy about the emotive-side of feared nuclear inadvertence that can help us construct an intentional explanation of the resolution of the missile crisis?

The German philosopher Jurgen Habermas has discussed medical crises in a way that is particularly sensitive to what is perhaps the central feature of the evolution of feared nuclear inadvertence: The sense of losing control of a situation in a way and to an extent that have potentially catastrophic consequences. According to Habermas:

The crisis cannot be separated from the one who is undergoing it - the patient experiences his powerlessness vis a vis the objectivity of his illness only because he is a subject condemned to passivity and temporarily deprived of the possibility of being a subject in full possession of his powers. We therefore associate with crises the idea of an objective force that deprives a subject of some part of his normal sovereignty. To conceive of a process as a crisis is tacitly to give it a normative meaning - the resolution of the crisis effects a liberation of the subject caught up in it.<sup>49</sup>

DE in  
court-  
room!

and



Keeping in mind that the relation of this passage is one of analogy to a nuclear crisis, rather than a description of it, let us examine its pertinence to our subject. A nuclear crisis is psychologically a crisis of the imagination, a crisis brought on by informed thought experiments whose results lead one to conclude that an inadvertent nuclear war is becoming increasingly probable. Leaders begin to imagine that, at some point in the quite near future, they will themselves be "condemned to passivity" [and] "deprived of full possession of their powers. " This is one way to describe the psychological concomitant of Schelling's neglected insight: That in the Cuban missile crisis, the enemy was perceived by both sides to migrate from the other superpower out onto the political-military "environment". Because the causation of nuclear risk has moved mysteriously onto a stage where the actors intentions no longer control the direction of the unfolding drama, leaders begin to imagine themselves deprived of a very large portion (and in the tragically worst case, all) of their normal sovereignty as leaders and as managers. This is why any resolution of the crisis will be accompanied by intense feelings of "liberation of the subject[s] caught up in it." Leaders will find themselves suddenly extricated from their nascent confusion and powerlessness. They will be keenly aware that their situation, once so darkly perverse, now seems to be returning to its more familiar, more predictable, less dangerous state. This

(and see JCS!)

-188-

My feeling: JFK had failed  
to blow it, to give away  
the nuclear missile.

can hardly help but be accompanied by feelings of a Houdini-like escape, of relief and joy, like that of a prisoner condemned to the gallows but who is pardoned unexpectedly before he can be hung.

This provides, I think, a rudimentary analogical framework useful for beginning to comprehend the emotive side of the resolution of the missile crisis the weekend of October 26-28, 1962. Specifically, it provides some thickness to the psychological context of Robert Kennedy's message to Dobrynin. He said: "I was not giving them an ultimatum but a statement of fact." This statement, which can only seem cowardly, mendacious, foolish or self-serving when viewed as a component of some superpower "game," takes on a kind of somber credibility if we try hard to appreciate the elements of the inner life of the crisis. Rather than being an ultimatum, an attempt to deliver the coup de grace to Khrushchev, it becomes indeed a recognition of the apparent fact that all concerned were rapidly being reduced to helpless passivity, carried along by events toward an awful, perhaps even nuclear war. I think it is therefore useful to consider that by October 26, the Cuban missile "fever" had become intolerable in both Moscow and Washington. There seemed by then to be strong (if largely tacit) agreement that the time was fast approaching when a point of no return would be reached after which these (formerly) sovereign actors would all be consumed by a fever neither of them understood nor was any longer able to control. I think

but  
not  
yet  
(JFK  
thought)  
(see JFK/R  
or others)  
yes —  
been  
cultivated?

& without which, no K  
backdoor or backdoor — or  
perhaps even!



*He is not "proof, conclusion"!  
see 165, 166*

it is therefore not at all unreasonable to assume that the "statement of fact," which forever looks to the psychologically naive like an ultimatum, was in fact a last-ditch effort by both sides to bring control of the crisis in from the crazy environment in which they felt they were trapped. On October 26, Khrushchev wrote a letter demonstrating that he understood this perfectly well. Kennedy responded in kind the following day, after a second Khrushchev letter which suggested trading Soviet missiles in Cuba for American missiles in Turkey, a "deal" which provided the private, though not the public, basis for the resolution. By the evening of October 27, in other words, I believe Khrushchev was as delighted to receive the American "statement of fact" as the Americans were the following day to receive word of Khrushchev's acceptance of the terms. By that point each had a common enemy - the "environment," fear of nuclear inadvertence - far more menacing than one another. In such situations as these, in which adversaries perceive a common menace, deals are struck and alliances are formed.

*by K?!*

*(NO)\**

*{ WOW!  
MAD!*

It seems clear enough that Khrushchev had no doubt that he was receiving a "statement of fact," in the above sense: A declaration that, in the American view, the crisis was spinning out of control. In his memoirs, he recalled those final days of the crisis, leading up to the resolution:

*\* The 'deal' was mine, to  
Khrushchev let. know:  
"We won't destroy you  
god-damned misers!"*

I remember a period of six or seven days when the danger was particularly acute...I spent one of the most dangerous nights at the Council of Ministers office in the Kremlin. I slept on a couch in my office - and I kept my clothes on...I was ready for alarming news at any moment, and I wanted to be ready to react immediately.<sup>50</sup>

While Khrushchev was sleeping on a couch in the Kremlin, George Ball was doing likewise at the State Department, and Robert McNamara was spending every night<sup>7</sup>, all night, at the Pentagon as the highest ranking "desk officer" in the history of the Defense Department.<sup>51</sup> When news of Robert Kennedy's visit to Dobrynin reached Khrushchev, moreover, he found the message perfectly believable. It is interesting, in fact, that Khrushchev found not only the content of the message but also the demeanor of its bearer credible. According to Khrushchev, Dobrynin reported the following:

Robert Kennedy looked exhausted. One could see from his eyes that he had not slept for days. He himself said that he had not been home for six days and nights. "The President is in a grave situation," Robert Kennedy said, "and he does not know how to get out of it. We are under very severe stress. In fact we are under pressure from our military to use force against Cuba.

...president Kennedy implores Chairman Krushchev to accept his offer..."<sup>52</sup>

*i.e. give in, to threats.*

Coup ;

*(as cap said to me  
and Jim on May 5, 1971:  
"Move! For God's sake,  
move!")*



Was Robert Kennedy merely acting? Was this merely the last in a series of carefully crafted, fully controlled moves to force the Soviets either to fold or to call the President bluff? This play-acting would have been clever indeed, the cleverest aspect of any American ultimatum. Or was Robert Kennedy's message a genuine attempt to convey to the Soviets the American fear that the crisis was moving rapidly and inexorably toward war, with nuclear war in that case a live possibility? <sup>\*</sup> No one can now say for certain, of course. But all the psychological data bearing on the crisis as it was lived forward are on the side of the "statement of fact." Khrushchev believed it. So, I think, should we. NO

There is yet a third sort of analogy to the missile crisis that ought to incline us to take Robert Kennedy as seriously as Khrushchev took him when he said he came bearing a "statement of fact." This is the identity crisis. Here is how Habermas makes the central point of such deeply personal upheavals:

Fate is fulfilled in the revelation of conflicting norms against which the identities of the participants shatter, unless they are able to summon up the strength to win back their freedom by shattering the mythical power of fate through the formation of new identities.<sup>53</sup>

The central analogical point is fairly obvious but critically important. People are necessarily and profoundly changed by participating in terrifying, wrenching crises. Intuitively, we

*Because Pres could not accept K's offer —  
yet — without trying without for 24 hours  
... 15:14 ...*

know this must be so and, objectively, one of the central legacies of the missile crisis is that it marked the end of the most dangerous phase of the cold war. Relations between the superpowers improved dramatically after the crisis. The participants seemed to have learned that deep crises between them simply had to be avoided. The great fear of somehow forgetting the cardinal rule of the nuclear age seems to have provoked the integration of the rule far more deeply than before into superpower relations. The profundity of the learning from a nuclear crisis matched the profundity of the fear which gave rise to it.

Psychologists from William James to Erik Erikson have agreed with Habermas that a changed conception of personal identity is at the psychological core of all really profound learning in which great fear is ultimately involved.<sup>54</sup> How might this transformation of identity have worked its way out in the evolving psychological life of the key American participants in the missile crisis? Probably the most important concomitant of their attempt to "win back their freedom" would have been the necessity of becoming collaborators with the government of the Soviet Union. The Cuban missile crisis was an event that leaders on both sides had eventually confronted together in order to resolve it. Moreover, this was no minor border dispute or trade agreement or even an arms control treaty. This was, I believe, a terrifying experience for all of them, one which challenged some of their most basic assumptions about their

can  
(B)?

ye



abilities and the nature of "the enemy" in the nuclear age. Kierkegaard once said truly that those who are "educated by dread...[and] educated by possibility ...will then interpret reality differently."<sup>55</sup> A glimpse of the nature and extent of the learning wrought by fear in the missile crisis may be seen in even the briefest chronology of superpower interactions during the Kennedy Presidency. The first two years of John Kennedy's presidency were marked by a series of episodes which were fraught with unprecedented nuclear danger. In early 1961, a military clash between Soviet supplied and advised forces and their American-led counterparts was narrowly averted in Southeast Asia. In October, 1961, American and Soviet tanks, apparently poised to open fire, faced each other at point-blank range on either side of the newly constructed Berlin Wall. Ultimately and fortunately, neither side saw fit to open fire and the crisis abated, though it was far from resolved. Finally, during the missile crisis the superpowers came closer than before or since to a large scale military engagement. If war had broken out, most leaders on both sides believed nuclear war was likely to follow.

Deeply shaken by the missile crisis, Kennedy and Khrushchev did a turnabout. In a commencement address at the American University, June 10, 1963, President Kennedy announced that discussions were underway in Moscow to work out the details of an agreement which would eliminate atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons by the United States, the Soviet Union and Great

*unilateral  
reaction!*

Britain. He further announced that the United States would henceforth forego atmospheric testing unilaterally, so long as the other nuclear powers refrained from doing so. The Soviets reciprocated. Moreover, for the first time in memory they opened their airwaves to Western broadcasts by permitting the entire text of the President's speech to be broadcast, in Russian and unjammed, throughout the Soviet Union. In the weeks that followed, they ceased altogether jamming foreign broadcasts in the Russian language, no matter what the subject or content.<sup>56</sup> Finally, during a speech in East Berlin on July 2, 1963, Khrushchev endorsed the atmospheric test ban. The limited Test Ban Treaty was signed on August 5 and ratified by the American Senate on September 24 by a vote of 80 to 19.

It is worthwhile to pause briefly to consider just how unexpected and remarkable this turnabout in U.S.-Soviet relations seemed at the time. In his inaugural speech of January, 1961, President Kennedy asked the American people to "bear any burden," to "pay any price" in the "long twilight struggle" against Communism.<sup>57</sup> The conceptual distance between that Cold War rhetoric and attitude and that expressed in his most famous post-missile crisis speech is absolutely remarkable. Here in his American University address is how President Kennedy expressed what he had learned since 1961 and, I believe, particularly in the missile crisis:



If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis our most basic common link is the fact that we all inhabit this planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal...confident and unafraid, we labor on - not toward a strategy of annihilation, but toward a strategy of peace.<sup>58</sup>

(not just  
multilateral  
treaties!)

Peace is the  
way.

On July 26, in a televised address to the nation, he introduced the atmospheric test-ban treaty, arguing that "the achievement...is not a victory for one side, it is a victory for mankind."<sup>59</sup> And so it was.

This turnabout in word and deed, reflecting a deep transformation in the perception of nuclear risk, would have been inconceivable without the Cuban missile crisis. Erik Erikson, the great theorist of the personal identity crisis, has argued that "a new life task presents a crisis whose outcome can be a successful graduation, or alternatively, an impairment of the life cycle which will aggravate future crises."<sup>60</sup> It seems clear in retrospect that the altered identities forged in the key actors during the missile crisis did indeed constitute a "successful graduation," in Erikson's Terms. Since 1962, there has been no event of even remotely comparable nuclear danger. It appears, therefore, as if the life histories of the men in the White House and Kremlin in late October, 1962 have become central constituents of the broader historical moment of the nuclear age of the late twentieth century. And there is no way

plausibly to account for this development, this learning, in my view, without accepting as basic three propositions which are antithetical to the whole tradition of nuclear strategy and policy and of the interpretation of the missile crisis: First, that the missile crisis is not "like" any other international crisis; though it has psychological analogues in other sorts of crises, second, that Robert Kennedy did indeed deliver a "statement of fact" to the Soviets on the evening of October 27, 1962, a statement behind which lay a week of the most profound confusion and fear of inadvertent nuclear war; and third, that the uniqueness and inscrutability of the psychological transformations which occurred during the missile crisis make it more, rather than less, interesting as an object of still further study and learning about how best to avoid nuclear war. In that pivotal crisis, the participants were able somehow to connect their fear with their actions in adaptive ways. They had that experience. But neither they, nor we, have yet found a way to connect them in theory in a way that integrates their practice into our formal thinking about avoiding nuclear war. We are still searching for the meaning. Some preliminary steps are taken in the chapters which follow to articulate the general direction some such search ought to follow.

B argues as if the crisis had been resolved  
§ JFK's version of K offer ("U Thant offer")  
on Sunday, after (backing down from) Soviet ult  
(and rejection of K offer, publicly and privately)  
or, instead of making it. 27th and next day on  
(say, Saturday). He equates the K offer with RFK ult;  
(DENIAL) "statement"



VIII. THE ADAPTIVE ROLE OF FEAR IN A NUCLEAR CRISIS

So soon as psychology has finished with dread, it has nothing to do but deliver it over to dogmatics.

Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread, 1844

In the late nineteenth-century there arose in the United States a popular movement among the educated classes known as "mind-cure." Somewhat like what we today call "pop psychology," mind-curers emphasized the usefulness of looking on the bright side, of using verbal and mental tricks to banish from awareness uncomfortable thoughts and feelings and, in general, to glorify the virtues of mental discipline. Christian Science became the most influential and long-lived exponent of this rather sunny and optimistic view of human nature and human ability. The emotions, of course, were a constant source of embarrassment to these seat-of-the-pants rationalists. And of all the emotions known to mankind, fear troubled them the most. Giving into fear, in their view, meant relinquishing one's hold on the higher, rational faculties - faculties which, despite what the outrageous Charles Darwin and his like had been saying, distinguished rational human beings from ordinary beasts. Fear could never, as they saw it, be good, be adaptive. Man could reason and reason, for man, was adaptive. In his classic, The Varieties of Religious Experience William James, showing his typical virtuosity in uncovering obscure but interesting sources, cites one Horace Fletcher's recommendations to

} NO?

well...

← Was K's final fear, "dread"? or very precise fear?!

mind-curers for getting rid of that embarrassing maladaptive anachronism, fear. According to Horace Fletcher, one must perform a verbal switch:

Fear has had its uses in the evolutionary process, and seems to constitute the whole of forethought in most animals; but that it should remain any part of the mental equipment of civilized life is an absurdity...To assist in the analysis of fear, and in the denunciation of its expressions, I have coined the word fearthought to stand for the unprofitable element of forethought...in order to place it where it really belongs, in the category of harmful, unnecessary, and therefore not respectable things.<sup>1</sup>

C.S.

The important thing for Mr. Fletcher and his fellow mind-curers, apparently, was to purge themselves of fearful emotion, to have (as Fletcher refers to it in the title of his pamphlet) "forethought minus fearthought," and thus to exert rational control over whatever situation one might be facing or anticipating.

I believe the conduct and outcome of the Cuban missile crisis refutes the view of the mind-curers and their lineal descendents, the rational/irrational actor psychologists. Fear was pervasive, from the President and General Secretary right down to ordinary citizens, and fear was efficacious - without the rise of what I have called the crystal ball effect and of eventual situational perversity, and outright horror at the prospect of inadvertent nuclear war, it is hard to imagine the missile crisis being resolved peacefully. But I must re-emphasize: Although this is my own view of why this most

(US)

NO

(NO)

*Given just US fear, (say, K had shot down U-2: no E response. But then, and without event, K would have been the victor. K doing that, if he was so proud?*



dangerous crisis in history transpired as it did - driven by fear, adaptive fear - the vast majority of the participants and analysts with opinions on this issue come down hard very much where the mind-curers came down in the nineteenth century: Emphasizing "forethought minus fearthought," so to speak. I tried to show in the previous chapter how and why the key participants have such difficulty connecting the great fear they recall with the event itself - the resolution of the missile crisis - they seek to explain. In spite of their (implied) protestation, I tried therein to demonstrate that feared nuclear inadvertence drove the missile crisis to its dramatic, only partially comprehensible and quite amicable <sup>(1)</sup> conclusion. The emphasis was on the phenomenology of nuclear inadvertence. In this chapter, I want to look more closely at the adaptive role of fear in a nuclear crisis. Obviously, there is something valid and useful in the attempts of people like the mind-curers to rationalize human action. Fear is not always adaptive. But often it is, and I believe the resolution of the missile crisis is a significant case in point

But to believe these things is, within the present climate of nuclear studies, to risk appearing to promote the virtues of irrational actors in nuclear crises, which is of course nonsensical. To put the matter plainly, fear (and the emotions generally) are regarded by nearly all exponents of "nuclear crisis management" as, to quote the estimable Horace Fletcher, "not respectable things." This is not the place for a full-blown critical history and analysis of nuclear crisis

NO  
("fair"  
"happy  
for all")

supports  
"manhattan  
strategy"!  
(see 1973)

but Bell is 1971?

-200-

management as a discipline, but some things are clear enough. First, the discipline was born shortly after the missile crisis when, according to Coral Bell, Robert McNamara said in testimony to congress: "There is no longer any such thing as strategy; only crisis management."<sup>2</sup> By "crisis management", moreover, was meant (at least as McNamara was interpreted) the systematic attempt to rationalize the conduct of international crises, but especially deep superpower crises. Finally, the reconstructed Cuban crisis became the sine qua non of crisis management. It is typically described by specialists in crisis management as the calmest, coolest, most measured and laudable example on record of exerting rational control over a complex and dangerous international situation. Emotion is never mentioned, except perhaps to point out that the EXCOMM members were, after all, human and they did occasionally lose their tempers. Even the debate in this field which is presently the hottest topic of conversation is carried on between people such as Alexander George, who believe that prospects for rationalizing (and thus resolving) nuclear crises are, if not exactly good then at least plausible, and those like Richard Ned Lebow who believe that such prospects are poor at best.<sup>3</sup> The point I wish to emphasize is that all parties to this controversy seek to expunge "fearthought from forethought," both in their interpretations of the missile crisis and in whatever applications they envision in some future crisis. To all of them, following McNamara's own reconstructed analysis of the

NWR  
phew?

OK



missile crisis and his unequivocal endorsement of crisis management, fear is bad, is maladaptive and can only lead to bad management. In a nuclear crisis, this of course means that increased fear will lead <sup>directly not</sup> straightaway to an increased likelihood of nuclear holocaust. But because fear is so widely believed to be maladaptive by participants in the missile crisis and analysts alike, anyone arguing for the adaptive importance of fear will appear to be up to his neck in a nonsequiter.

The problem, here as elsewhere in the study of a nuclear crisis, is this: Participants and analysts alike have for various reasons failed to appreciate the vast difference between a rational reconstruction, derived by looking backward at a selected, distorted, perhaps coherent set of mental snapshots of the past on the one hand and, on the other, the uncertain phenomenology of living the event forward without the slightest idea of how it will turn out. What this tilting toward rational reconstruction sums to is the widespread inability, I believe, among all manner of students of the missile crisis, and of so much nuclear policy-making which rests on its interpretation, to believe that fear was thick in the psychological texture of the missile crisis and, even more importantly, that this fear was and remains unprecedented. It was a profound fear, and that fear was <sup>only</sup> not fear of calculated attack, as one characteristically finds at the psychological root of conventional deterrence failures, but was rather fear of inadvertence - of fate, if you will. I believe that if we try

OK - had  
to ult. / why  
(rather than  
"drift":  
or immediate  
conversion)

vividly "loss of oneself, one's self-control, one's self-possession"  
(Kaiser), of "disgrace" (Fannon, Deming), one's role/pid/control of  
one's own and others' behavior

to step backward into the missile crisis and look forward with the confused and fearful participants, this is what we see and feel: Inadvertent nuclear danger. Without this look and this feel, I think, the resolution of the missile crisis cannot be explained. Indeed, as I have tried in various ways to show, the advocates of the rational/irrational actor psychologies who dominate the discussion cannot explain it. But this, as I will now argue, is because they don't understand the adaptive role of fear in the resolution. If we better comprehend what the missile crisis was like for the key participants then and there, I think the adaptive role of fear will become obvious, as will the justice of holding that the goal of leaders in a nuclear crisis ought not be expunging "fearthought from forethought", but encouraging it, and that such encouragement would be an altogether adaptive attitude to take.

Hands,  
Lenny,  
last! \*

PSR

It is important to understand the conceptual and methodological foundation for the vast and rapidly expanding work on psychology and avoiding nuclear war. It is this: The Cuban missile crisis is not psychologically unique. In beginning with this assumption, investigators can feel perfectly free to roam far and wide in search of data, which they gather mostly from analyses of other international crises, but also increasingly from the literatures of scientific psychology. In an important sense, therefore, they do not regard other crises as analogous to the missile crisis, so much as they consider all of them to be cases which will one day be shown psychologically

?

\*Bigness fact it seems obvious to many that  
it had to break down, given inequalities!  
(Ed. Rose Ritten in book...)



to be examples of the same general principles of international crisis management, whatever they turn out to be. The method is therefore intrinsically comparative. In the introduction to a recent and important comparative study of this sort, Psychology and Deterrence, Robert Jervis has summarized the findings of himself and his colleagues regarding what they call "motivated biases":

...motivated biases arise from the emotions generated by conflicts that personal needs and severe situational dilemmas pose. These biases serve important psychological functions, primarily minimizing...discomfort...The individual will pay a high price in the future as reality inescapably shapes and defeats the policy, but in the interim he or she avoids intolerable psychological stress and conflict.<sup>4</sup>

or she  
looks out

This conclusion derives from viewing the analyses of many failures of non-nuclear deterrence through a prism provided by the rational/irrational actor psychologies. They find this repeated pattern: Errors compounding errors as decision-makers, fearing the worst, cave into stress, retreat into fantasy, exercise poor judgment and lead their nations into disastrous wars. Importantly for our purposes, these authors (like nearly everyone writing on the subject of international crises) seek to generalize their findings on failed conventional deterrence, for which data are plentiful, to the missile crisis and to some hypothetical future nuclear crisis. The psychological

which could/would lead to war ?!

if only we don't halt as soon as change  
"balance" ?! (or FU think ?!)

devolution which forms the underlying pattern for the repeated failure of non-nuclear deterrence is what they also fear most about a nuclear crisis. The psychological rule of thumb seems in general to be this: If non-nuclear deterrence can fail so often and easily due to fear and its psychological side-effects, then nuclear deterrence (in a crisis) will be even more psychologically fragile, because the fear will be so much greater. As Jervis says: "... motivated biases arise from the emotions..." Emotion, he and his colleagues usually find, is bad, and fear is particularly bad. Fear, in an important sense, is really the psychological enemy in a nuclear crisis, according to this view. *(really?) (see below, Jervis)* yes & no

It is worth taking a closer look, however, at the hypothetical psychological causal sequence if this canonical, maladaptive path to the failure of deterrence is to lead, in the worst case, to nuclear holocaust. The sequence is summarized in Figure 6.

---

Insert Figure 6 here

---

If the psychological parallelism between failure of conventional deterrence and failure of nuclear deterrence is to hold water, then something like the following must occur: We begin with entry into a crisis and its immediate psychological corollary, heightened fear of attack. Thus begins the activation of the so-called "spiral model" of crisis escalation articulated some



years ago by Jervis.<sup>5</sup> Fear of attack leads to a ratcheting upward of preparedness for war which, in turn, creates ever higher levels of fear in the adversary, leading to a new round of still more menacing-looking preparations. The psychological state which results from this process is stress, a concept which is central to the scenarios for nuclear war imagined by advocates of the rational/irrational actor psychologies. The contribution of stress to this process of psychological devolution is to render policy-makers progressively less rational than they might be under non-crisis conditions. Eventually stress becomes intolerable and leaders seek to escape from it as quickly and completely as possible. Thus it is claimed, in effect, the problem situation of leaders is fundamentally altered by the presence of stress: From seeking to achieve this or that foreign policy goal to achieving an escape from intolerable stress. This shifts leaders' attention inward, clouds perception of the outside world and leads ultimately to wholesale miscalculation and misperception.

OK - can work  
both ways  
in  
escape instincts  
of "normal"  
unpredictable,  
politics,  
behavior!  
OR FLIGHT  
FORWARD;  
CLINGING  
TO TRADITIONAL  
STRATEGY.

As the attention of leaders shifts inward, according to this view, we will begin to notice the whole range of defensive psychopathologies first described in a formal way by Sigmund Freud and Anna Freud.<sup>6</sup> In psychoanalytic terms, the ego defends itself against threatening stimuli by warding off, filtering and otherwise ignoring information which might lead to further stress. The overall political-military result of this process of psychological self-defense has been stated by Richard

Left the heart - a smell of  
burning...

Far ahead at the end  
of the tunnel - is the  
light & the misty one...

B:  
x are what K did, finally  
and what JFK was ready to do, "eventually"  
(too late, if K doesn't "see the light")

Ned Lebow: "The psychological stress that arises from...decisional dilemma[s] is usually received by the adoption of defensive avoidance as a coping strategy. Leaders commit themselves to a course of action and deny information that indicates that their policy might not succeed."<sup>7</sup> It should be emphasized that leaders under stress, wallowing defensively as they try to avoid threatening information, are coping not primarily with the objective contingencies of the crisis situation. Rather, they are coping mainly with inner *both!* discomfort. And this, finally, is what renders this whole fear-driven process so maladaptive: Leaders under stress seek to adapt to inner psychological states rather than to objective reality. In short, their policies are unconsciously but powerfully motivated by the need to escape hard decisions, rather than to make them effectively. "

Psychological devolution of this sort is generally believed to be the most likely source in a nuclear crisis of rising risk of nuclear holocaust, An attack - a nuclear attack in that instance - is believed to be increasingly probable. Actions taken by a group of leaders to bolster nuclear deterrence will be seen by fearful and stress-ridden leaders on the other side as preparations for attack. At some point, never before reached in the nuclear age but much feared by students of the alleged relation between psychological stress and nuclear danger, the pressure of the crisis will lead <sup>No!</sup> inexorably to a panicky attempt to escape the intolerable stress by attacking first. Leaders

*or surrender! (or creative compromise: best kind)*  
OK



will by then have been exhausted, confused and frightened by their recursive participation in a mind-game described many years ago by Schelling: "He thinks we think he thinks we think...he thinks we think he'll attack; so he thinks we shall; so he will; so we must."<sup>8</sup> By some such psychological process as this, leaders will have initiated the nuclear war that, at the outset of the crisis, all sought to avoid unequivocally. And at the psychological fountainhead of this process will have been fear, leading to stress and its associated psychopathologies, which will together have been responsible for transforming leaders' beliefs from total opposition to initiating nuclear war to go ahead and authorize nuclear first use, either in a preemptive strike or in some more initially limited escalatory action.

This is the central prognostication and concern of proponents of the rational/irrational actor psychologies which presently circumscribe discussion of nuclear policy. We should note two of its characteristics: First, while nuclear war would be arrived at inadvertently, in the sense that the decision to end the crisis by launching nuclear weapons was not anticipated at the time of entry into the crisis, the object of the fear which drives the hypothesized psychopathologies has nothing to do with inadvertence itself, but is instead simply fear of being attacked. In other words, according to this view, leaders in a nuclear crisis will, in all probability, not learn anything significant as they try to manage it. It will seem to them, as

but, along with other goals (also "absolute, necessary") to the point of "accepting a (higher) risk of FN war..." (then, with losses, running a high risk - reducible by "survival" - which may or may not still seem unacceptable - in which case, punishment may be preferable to "wait" and b) perhaps being stuck 20) still "this later."

I learned from VN (and from studies Cuba II lecture) not from crisis, (except, of distant leaders; first, for goals - then, for not / 29 and 20 oct

it seems to these analysts, to be conceptually identical to a non-nuclear crisis. The conclusions reached by rational/irrational actor psychologists about the psychological devolution leading to nuclear war derive very largely from the extrapolations to nuclear war of their psychological analyses of failures of conventional deterrence. The comparative method, they believe, must be employed if we are ever to understand how nuclear deterrence might be brought psychologically to the failing point.<sup>9</sup>

Will? Is this  
not possible?  
Is there another  
way?

Second, we should not fail to note the direct connection between the position that, so to speak, in a nuclear crisis we have little to fear other than fear itself, and the central tenets of the dominant rational/irrational actor psychologists. The goal of all these individuals is to rationalize a nuclear crisis, to develop ways to manage it in ways that give rise to fewer fears and more rational analysis. All its proponents begin, importantly, without concern about what the look and feel of nuclear danger would be like, moving forward through a deep nuclear crisis. Or perhaps it would be slightly more charitable to say that none of these analysts seem to believe there is, or would be, much difference between a rational reconstruction (or pre-construction) of nuclear crisis, and the construction of it as one moves uncertainly and creatively through it. They all begin with the same assumption with which Schelling began many years ago: Rational actors will not initiate a nuclear war that is demonstrably suicidal. But whereas Schelling and most

NO!

No



members of the strategy and arms control community seem to believe that rationality will remain relatively and sufficiently robust even in superpower crises, there has recently arisen a large chorus of voices warning us that this may not be so, that in a nuclear crisis, rationality may become profoundly and tragically degraded. Some worry about a "conspiracy of circumstantial craziness" (as I referred to it in Chapter IV); some do not. This difference is probably due to rational actor psychologists like Schelling having placed heavy emphasis on nuclear force structure as a deterrent to nuclear war in a crisis, while the irrational actor psychologists worry that <sup>OR...</sup> fear-driven, stress-producing psychological devolution may swamp any force structure, no matter how robust it may seem in non-crisis situations. Despite these differences, one searches the landscape of nuclear discourse almost in vain looking for someone who does not believe that fear will be at the psychological core of the momentum which will transform the next nuclear crisis into a nuclear war.

For all these worriers over the psychological mechanisms which may lead us into nuclear war, the Cuban missile crisis ought to stand as the foremost anomaly. It ought to, but it does not. Far from it, in fact. Instead, this psychologically unique crisis, one which tells us a very great deal about the relation between fear and learning in a nuclear crisis, is regarded as just another crisis. <sup>NO</sup> The nature, extent and role of fear in its outcome is annihilated, usually totally, in the

like JGB!  
"Rational" the  
man as  
for not  
being  
irrational,  
unpleasant."

yes

well?  
what do  
you  
think?

No

dozens (or perhaps hundreds) explanations one may now consult regarding the event. The fear is minimized, the crisis is normalized and psychological theories of international crises are confirmed left and right. But it is simply a fact that the missile crisis is the empirical flaw in any attempt to apply to a nuclear crisis rational/irrational actor psychologies whose data are derived from, and can be demonstrated to apply to, instances of failed conventional deterrence. Their advocates must, I believe, simply predict the wrong outcome in the missile crisis. Fear in that instance did not lead to holocaust, or even to war. The maladaptive psychological path to oblivion just was not taken by the managers of the missile crisis.<sup>10</sup>

*(It's all immediate if the support there was no fear; but otherwise...!)*

How do the rational/irrational actor psychologists come to grips with the uncomfortable (for their theories) juxtaposition of the greatest nuclear danger to date and its peaceful resolution? Schelling, Lebow and other outspoken analysts tend to reach the same basic, highly paradoxical and deeply disturbing conclusion: The missile crisis transpired and concluded as it did because its key participants were "irrational." Schelling appears at times to hold a version of Dean Acheson's view that the Kennedy Administration's handling of the crisis was greatly abetted by having "plain dumb luck" on its side.<sup>11</sup> Acheson believed the rational thing to do would have been to attack the Soviet missile bases in Cuba quickly and without warning. To fear the consequences of some such attack was, according to this view, plain irrational because the United States then had

*'fear'??*

*?*

*Acheson shows "rational" madness*

*\* JFK, started to finish (esp. at end)*

*K, start, but rational at finish (in B's view). (as K saw it!)*



overwhelming superiority in both strategic nuclear forces and in conventional forces in the Caribbean. Schelling has gone further to suggest that if the President really believed (as Theodore Sorensen reported) that during the final weekend of the crisis the risk of war with the Soviet Union was "between one out of three and even," then the rational thing to do would have been to preempt Soviet nuclear forces, which were vastly inferior in size to American forces. The President did not and thus, in Schelling's view, he could not really have believed in those odds or, more likely, he simply behaved irrationally by not ordering a preemptive strike against the Soviet nuclear forces.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Lebow has written that Khrushchev was irrational to place the missiles in Cuba, for he should have known that such an act would never be tolerated, and also that Kennedy was irrational (and irresponsible) in electing to force their removal.<sup>13</sup> In effect, both hawks and doves unite around the theory that the resolution of the missile crisis is <sup>NO</sup> anomalous, explicable only by invoking the "irrationality" of its central cast of characters. But of course this auxiliary hypothesis - "X was irrational" - is required because the rational/irrational actor psychological theories predict the wrong outcome. In theory, we should have had a nuclear war. In practice, we didn't. They (and we) were just plain lucky. The peaceful outcome of the missile crisis was a fluke because it happened to be managed by irrational leaders.

*Handwritten notes:*  
- "chuck" above "crisis"  
- "does TCS really by then?" above "the rational"  
- "or else" above "which were vastly"  
- "compromise!" above "inferior"  
- "or by backing down?" above "irrationally"  
- "But not to resolve crisis" above "Khrushchev"  
- "(JFK yes, K no)" above "and also that"  
- "one of" above "of"  
- "NO" above "In theory"  
- "particular" above "The peaceful"

but irrational, "normal" <sup>prevents war!</sup>  
(which is mad)  
not only in crisis!

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The explanatory cul-de-sac that the missile crisis throws up at the rational/irrational actor psychologies is insufficiently appreciated. On the one hand, it is very widely believed that the psychological event most to be feared in a nuclear crisis is <sup>well?</sup> a degradation of rationality. Rational actors, it is believed, simply will not go to nuclear war because they will understand fully the catastrophic consequences of such an act. Irrational actors, however, quaking with fear and caving into stress, might somehow forget that nuclear war is suicidal, or might simply become so overwhelmed by the fear of a nuclear first strike against them, that they might somehow decide it is in their best interest to go to nuclear war. Yet according to some of the most visible proponents of this psychological view, the missile crisis did not lead to nuclear war, either in spite of the irrationality of the leaders <sup>JFK, not K</sup> (Lebow), or because <sup>JFK, not K</sup> they were irrational (Schelling). The theory not only predicts the wrong result, therefore, but this result is explained in exactly the same way that the opposite (actual) result would be explained: That is, if a nuclear war had occurred, its occurrence would have been interpreted as a function of degraded rationality, having occurred as a function of fear-driven stress. So, hypothetical irrationality is held to account for a nuclear war not having occurred in the missile crisis, and for the nuclear war that probably will occur in some future crisis. In science, and indeed in everyday life, one ought to regard with extreme skepticism a theory which can explain opposite outcomes in an NO



identical fashion. In fact, it is impossible to specify the conditions under which the theory might conceivably be regarded as mistaken. In the face of such a theory, one must begin to suspect that something is fundamentally wrong with its approach to its subject matter. This is certainly true in this instance. The actual psychological evolution during the missile crisis is really a very square peg which just cannot be made plausibly to fit into the round hole provided for it by the rational/irrational actor psychologies.

Let us then take a systematic look at (what I am calling) the "actual" psychological evolution during the missile crisis. By "actual", of course, I mean nothing as extravagant as the accurate and complete record of psychological life during the episode. No such thing exists, nor ever will exist. By "actual", I merely mean keeping the phenomenological prerogative foremost: As we try to reconstruct the past, we do so insofar as possible with a view to looking vicariously forward - in this case into the look and feel of nuclear danger. Also, we should begin with the assumption that fear in the missile crisis was adaptive; it was connected in some way with the peaceful resolution. We assume this because there is no evidence at all supporting the psychological domino theory which holds that a nuclear crisis necessarily leads to fear of attack, thence to stress and psychopathology, to the raised risk of holocaust and, in the worst case, to the holocaust itself. As I have suggested, the outcome, conduct and apparent psychological life

of leaders during the missile crisis simply refutes this. NO

Instead, we begin with what we have discovered so far: That the missile crisis led to overpowering fear of nuclear

inadvertence. <sup>yes, but...</sup> Here we assume that this response was adaptive. Was it necessary?

At the end of this chapter I will offer some thoughts as to why this may have been so.

An outline of the adaptive psychological path to peaceful nuclear crisis resolution is given in Figure 7.

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Insert Figure 7 Here

---

The first thing we need to notice is the kind of fear - the fear's object - which seems to have preoccupied leaders on both sides as the missile crisis evolved: Fear of inadvertent nuclear war. President Kennedy and General Secretary Khrushchev both seem to have feared that events would somehow outpace their own ability to control them. Neither seems to have harbored any doubts that his counterpart wanted <sup>BUT</sup> desperately to avoid a nuclear war. But the missile crisis surely was stressful. In a recent interview, Dean Rusk spoke for all the key members of the EXCOMM when he recalled: "... we sustained a crisis at a very high level of intensity for some thirteen days. How long can human beings sustain a crisis at that level before sleeplessness, weariness, fear of the unknown, suspicion and accident begin to play a role?"<sup>14</sup> The answer, one suspects, is not much longer than the thirteen days to which Rusk refers.

Below:

see Truman, JFR at Nitze, Saturday



Yet despite the obvious tension, weariness and stress (recall, for a moment, Khrushchev's report of the distrought, disheveled Robert Kennedy who visited Dobrynin on October 27), the available evidence suggests that, as the crisis evolved, participants engaged in less stereotyped thinking, increased empathy with the plight of the adversary and greatly diminished tendencies toward "groupthink" and other typical indications that leaders are caving into stress. Rusk, McNamara, Robert Kennedy, Sorensen and Bundy were particularly effective at helping the EXCOMM to avoid the sort of premature movement toward ill-thought-out consensus that seemed to have characterized the process by which the Bay of Pigs fiasco was hatched. In the first day's sessions, for example, we find McNamara cautioning against premature endorsement of using military force against Cuba:

Mr. President, this is why I think tonight we ought to put on paper the alternative plans and the probable, possible consequences thereof in a way that State and Defense could agree on...Because the consequences of these actions have not been thought through clearly.<sup>15</sup>

A particularly striking example from these secretly-made tapes is the cautionary warning with which Bundy draws the first meeting of October 16 to a close. President Kennedy has just summarized where he believes the consensus lay. He seems to believe, at that point, that option "number one" will have to be

exercised, regardless of what else is decided upon (that is, the airstrike to take out the missile sites).

JFK:..At least we're going to do number one, so it seems to me that we don't have to wait very long. We, ought to be making those preparations.

Bundy: You want to be clear, Mr. President, whether we have definitely decided against a political track. I, myself, think we ought...to work out a contingency on that.<sup>16</sup>

In fact, contingencies were worked out on many different tracks and these were summarized in Theodore Sorensen's discussion memo of October 17. Caution was the by-word right from the discovery of the missiles. The fear generated by nuclear danger was obviously behind it. This is also evident right from the start. One can almost feel the tension crackling as Robert Kennedy thinks out loud at the first day's meeting about the problems with even a minimal use of force, like a blockade:

*Before  
"dread"*

McNamara: You have to put a blockade in following any...

Speaker?: Sure

McNamara: ...limited action

RFK: Then we're going to have to sink Russian ships.

McNamara?: Right

RFK: Then we're gonna have to sink...

McNamara?: Right

RFK: ...Russian submarines...<sup>17</sup>



But of course that would mean outright war with the Soviet Union. It may have been in the course of some such reflection as this that Robert Kennedy began to wonder "what, if any, circumstance or justification gives this government or any government the moral right to bring its people and possibly all people under the shadow of nuclear destruction?"<sup>18</sup>

Here we come to the heart of the psychological matter, viewed from a phenomenological perspective, from the standpoint of individuals who were groping forward into an unknown and dangerous future: The Crystal Ball Effect. It is here that we may see the deep wisdom of Schelling's neglected insight based on his reading of the events in October, 1962 - that in the missile crisis, the enemy shifted from the nuclear adversary to the nuclear "environment." Feared nuclear inadvertence was in that instance the fear of a process and an outcome that is abhorred by both sides, thus creating a de facto but powerful

common enemy against which both sides must unite if they are to

keep the nuclear crystal ball from shattering. One psychological result of this process seems to be the turning outward onto the whole environment of potentially dangerous events, rather than a turning inward in defensive avoidance as the psychological domino theory of rational/irrational actors predicts. Instead of becoming less sensitive to the perceptions and needs of the adversary, leaders in October, 1962 seem to have obsessed with how their actions would be perceived by the

*JFK: "but not yet. First, under my terms."*

*Johnson, K on that morning (i.e. late Friday night).*

*moreover this (which was more nearly his "Fair fight" letter, he*

*(+ others) were drafting his "but moving" letter, sent*

*late Friday night his text: before leaving of*

*attack on SAM sites, for*

*right. It is 10:00 but right when he gets into alt.; sends order about 11:00, 1:00*

adversary. This is particularly striking on the American side in the unanimous assertion by the key members that the unsung heroes of the missile crisis were Llewelyn Thompson and Charles Bohlen, on whom the committee depended for insight into Khrushchev and his colleagues.<sup>19</sup> The reason for this preoccupation with the adversary's perception of the situation is by now obvious but is ignored by the purveyors of the rational/irrational actor psychologies: Both sides believed \* control was slipping away, both sides began to experience viscerally their absolute vulnerability to holocaust, and thus both sides came finally to appreciate that, then and there, the nuclear predicament of one another was identical. This, I believe, is why we saw in the final days of the missile crisis both sides reaching out to grasp hold of their situation before it destroyed them both. This seems to me more than anything else to explain the peaceful resolution: A growing tacit *"balanced"* understanding of the mutuality of shared nuclear danger, made implicitly when the Soviet Government ordered its ships to stop dead in the water before reaching the quarantine line on October 24, and made explicitly in Khrushchev's letter to Kennedy of October 26 and by the American "Statement of Fact" delivered by Robert Kennedy to Dobrynin the following evening. This explanation has the virtue of being consistent, I believe, with the psychological facts of the matter, as I infer them from the public record and private interviews. The main participants came greatly to fear inadvertent nuclear war, they became

\_\_\_\_\_. \* But JFK believed he had a day or so before using  
"O Plan" (he chose not to de-fuse IRBMs that  
yield, or at NATO meeting Sunday morning). He must not have  
- 1 - 1. - Castro and low-level. Nelson /AA/



What would have been a balanced deal?  
(nuclear baring is a major way - e.g. with allies)

-219- US really guarantees Castro, and giving up

determined not to allow it to happen and they succeeded. And Montenap  
fundamental to this explanation is the adaptive role of fear. (Castro's "deal")

Without <sup>US?</sup> fear - fear of nuclear inadvertence - it is almost  
impossible to imagine a settlement of the Cuban missile crisis  
accompanied with but one death. The more likely event, in my  
view, is a degree of conflict somewhere between a sizeable  
conventional war on at least one, and possibly more fronts, and  
a major nuclear catastrophe. The presence of great fear helped  
leaders avoid these results.

It may be useful to notice some important distinguishing  
features of an explanation in which feared nuclear inadvertence  
is central. First, it resembles, I imagine, a "common-sense"  
explanation of the crisis, and as such it differs in content,  
emphasis and form from the paradigmatic rational/irrational  
actor psychological interpretations. A phenomenological  
approach seeks to stay close to what, in this post-Freudian age,  
we now tend to think of as the "surface" of psychological life -  
the look and feel of nuclear danger as we believe it must have  
appeared to subjects then and there, trying to manage the  
missile crisis in October, 1962. We do not, importantly, begin  
with some "model" of what counts as rational behavior and then  
try to explain some action as the conceptual distance between  
the expected (assuming "perfect rationality") and the observed.  
In other words, there is no apriori reason in the  
phenomenological account why fear must be regarded as  
irrational, hence defined as maladaptive. We instead leave it  
an open question, at first.

But as we try to look at the missile crisis unblinded by the arbitrary assumption of the rational/irrational actor psychologies, it becomes clear, I believe, that fear in this instance was not only adaptive - indeed it was decisively adaptive. We may recall the estimable Horace Fletcher, with whose denunciation of "fearthought" I began this chapter. According to Fletcher, although "fear had its uses in the evolutionary process," it is an absurdity "to assume it need (or can) play any positive role for us now."<sup>20</sup> Fletcher, like the rational/irrational actor psychologists was for "forethought minus fearthought." But in the Cuban missile crisis, sorry to say for the theories of Fletcher and associates (but happily for the world in general), the evidence suggest that forethought was driven by "fearthought."

The most important difference between the rational-irrational actor accounts of a nuclear crisis and the one proposed here, a difference reflected in the similarity of the phenomenological account with common sense, is this: Each involves a different kind of explanation of human action. I have already discussed this briefly in Chapter V, but it may be worthwhile reiterating this distinction, because it accounts for why one mode of explanation cannot see the obvious-that fear in a nuclear crisis was adaptive - and one can. The explanations of the rational/irrational actor psychologists follow the same form as do explanations in the sciences. They begin with some general theories (often quite implicit and derived from a highly



selective borrowing from this or that branch of psychology, economics, game theory and so on). These theories are then "applied" to various cases of failed non-nuclear deterrence. It is important to appreciate that they are applied, not tested. What we find in this sort of literature are examples of thus and such psychological tendencies in crises, not a test of the theory. If this were science, the theory would be tested. But it is not, so it is "applied" - in this case to non-nuclear deterrence failures, mainly. The authors then deduce that "irrationality" is at the base of a good deal of the risk in these situations in which deterrence fails. Importantly, this whole framework is applied like a lacquer to history, glueing it in place, without much (or any) regard to the look and feel of the situations in which the actors themselves must have experienced when they made their decisions. Then, at last, this whole lacquering approach is spread over what is considered to be the plausible range of nuclear crises we may someday face. The past has been viewed from the standpoint of present theory; the future is viewed from the standpoint of a non-nuclear past which may well be irrelevant to a nuclear future; and in neither the accounts of the past nor of the future do we find any interest in the psychological thickness and texture of the fleeting series of "presents" in which all decisions must ultimately be made. The problem with this scientistic approach, in short, is that whereas in physics one tries to explain the behavior of non-conscious entities, in history, one must try to

understand the actions of people like ourselves, who have views (and fears) that must be causally connected to their eventual actions.

Conversely, the phenomenological approach is distinguished, as I have noted, by intentional explanations: It's central assumption is that our reasons for acting as we do are among the most important causes of our actions. This does not require laying aside the belief that human action is in some sense "lawful" - that it falls into patterns of causal connections which, with luck and effort, may be partially revealed in the enterprise of behavioral science. It certainly does not require making any assumption of "free will," leading to a kind of epistemological anarchy.<sup>31</sup> It does require, however, that we begin any psychological analysis of human action by trying to describe as accurately as possible the psychological reality of the situation of interest as it appeared to the subject of our inquiry. In an important sense if we fail to do this, if we fail to begin by situating our subjects, as best we can, in their situation, then whatever explanations we derive will not strictly apply to them. Because we will not have begun with an attempt to reconstruct their reality, any subsequent cleverness is for nought. As Charles Taylor has aptly put this point: "we need to see what has to be explained to get an idea of what it would mean to explain behavior."<sup>21</sup> In the case of the missile crisis, we need to begin with the psychological reality of feared inadvertence rather than, as has been so often the

*and / but US threats!*



case, the theoretical reality of the psychological analysts. That way, we can at least hope someday to offer an explanation of the actual missile crisis, not the reconstituted event of the same name which so exercises advocates of the rational/irrational actor psychologies.

The proof of an intentional explanation must finally be in the pudding of prediction. As philosopher and cognitive scientist Daniel Dennett has argued, when people are viewed as what he calls intentional systems - as integrated systems of intentions, fears, hopes, beliefs, desires, etc. - they may be understood to engage in behavior and thinking which ought to be increasingly predictable, as we learn more about what, in given circumstances, they are in fact intending to do.<sup>22</sup> This, I believe is exactly what we find when we compare the rational/irrational actor and phenomenological accounts of psychological evolution during the missile crisis. If we are at all successful in seeing and feeling that event as it must have appeared to its participants there and then, we must conclude that fear of inadvertent nuclear war was the controlling factor in their considerations. But if we accept this, then the rapid, unexpected and peaceful outcome makes sense - it follows from the phenomenology. If we take the standard view, as I have tried to show, we just cannot explain it. It doesn't make sense. We are forced back into pseudo-explanations in which it is claimed that the missile crisis is just an anomaly, perhaps the proverbial exception which "proves" the rule which holds

C. S.

NO

JFK's "normal madness" (his effective  
devil, in rational behavior, of his inner, sane, fear  
won for him. (as in 1973) (on Quong's  
dichotomization))

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that rationality, especially the absence of fear, is the  
prerequisite to successful nuclear crisis management. But this  
will only save the theory; it cannot explain what happened in  
the missile crisis. In that event, the crisis appears to have  
been resolved because of a great, general and mutual fear among  
the participants that they were about to live out a Nietzschean  
nightmare in which, having become enslaved to the momentum of  
the crisis they had created, they would bring on the ultimate  
catastrophe.

no one says  
this. (see  
Kendall  
theory).

which had one to think — why not the other, too?  
(the argument of power? I don't believe this!)

There may be those who believe that this conclusion - fear  
did play an adaptive role in the only nuclear crisis worthy of  
the name - offers the reader only half an explanatory loaf. For  
even if one accepts, against the received wisdom, that fear was  
adaptive, I have not said why this was so. I admit this. One  
could go on to pose Freudian questions, for example, such as:  
What was the interplay in participants in the missile crisis  
between "realistic anxiety" and "neurotic anxiety?" Why was the  
feeling of fear or anxiety in the missile crisis also  
accompanied by an adaptive "signal" to the participants to  
engage in what Freud called "protective action?" Or: What was  
the type and extent of trauma experienced by the participants in  
the missile crisis?<sup>23</sup> It is possible that in posing such  
questions as these one might derive answers leading to a  
"deeper" understanding of why fear was/will be adaptive in a  
nuclear crisis.

always ?!



But to pose them, or at any rate to pursue them, is to commit the same psychologists' fallacy, I believe, that has prevented an entire generation of psychologically-informed thinkers from drawing certain obvious, and obviously valid, conclusions about the missile crisis, about nuclear crisis management and the whole of nuclear policy. To put the matter plainly: The participants lived through a Cuban missile crisis, not a "trauma." The former is the event of interest which we want to understand. The latter is a loaded term plucked from the psychologists' reality - and a highly theoretical reality at that. I believe that if we stick close to our best guess about the evolving psychological reality of the participants, the causes of common sense and policy-relevance will both be better-served. As to how fear became adaptive, or what in general happened to the minds of the participants to make it so, I take William James still to have the last word:

...it probably operates through the subliminal door, then. But just how anything operates in this region is still unexplained, and we shall do well now to say good-bye to the process of transformation altogether - leavning it, if you like, a good deal of a psychological...mystery - and to turn our attention to the fruits of the... condition, no matter in what way they may have been produced.<sup>24</sup>

In other words, let us try to understand, to explain "the fruits"- in our case the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis - not the mental processes alleged to be "responsible" for the fruits. Perhaps if we psychologists and other students of nuclear issues can begin to focus on the fruits, on actual

events as they were lived forward and worked through, the next generation of analysts will more fully appreciate that the actions of men and women, not mental processes, are what need explaining. Who knows? If we keep our eye on the policy-makers, they may keep an eye on us. <sup>But!</sup> In any event, the "fruits" of my own analysis - the implications for policies affecting nuclear crisis prevention and management, are taken up in the following (concluding) chapter.



IX. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF AVOIDING NUCLEAR WAR:  
WHAT IS AT STAKE?

The more difficult the matter becomes, the greater the temptation to hasten along the easy road of speculation, away from fearful dangers and crucial decisions.

Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript, 1846

Is there any practical point to this psychological analysis of the resolution of the Cuban missile crisis? Does it make any concrete difference whether we view the episode as having been peacefully resolved because of the intense fear of inadvertent nuclear war or whether, conversely, we believe the outcome was simply a lucky break in which we miraculously (and irrationally) avoided the "Cuban War," or even the nuclear war, we probably should have expected? Does it matter whether we take a phenomenological stance toward the central actors in the crisis, by trying to understand the evolution of their individual and collective crystal ball effects, or whether we take the rational/irrational actor stance, measuring the actors putative rationality against some pre-conceived standard? Most importantly, are there any significant lessons to be derived from a psychological analysis of the resolution of the crisis, and toward which policies do the lessons derived from these analyses seem to lead us? In short, are we led to believe that the missile crisis is something more than a conceptual and historical curiosity and, if so, what does an understanding of its resolution seem to imply that we should do to increase

or ...  
(hands)

Is "Chile" a (total) bluff?  
Is "that the leaves smell  
to leave" (not total control)  
a bluff?

Do not ~~say~~ all "bluffs" have  
something of above elements?  
(this involving risks -  
of conviction / perception / prevention  
of change - oneself;  
of "loss of control control"?)



Now Winter - the dark & the cold -  
will be preceded by bright light  
("white light") & heat ...

Hell : Fire & Ice  
The fire next time

goal: just add (VGB)  
possibility of "creative summer"  
"presumptive summer"

|| (see Cleaver coming  
out of house naked,  
unlike Bobby Hutton)  
(bearing neck,  
like wolf, not Panther)



expulsion, loss of role/status/job/home/  
authority/influence, integration of org/other  
disobedience, dishonor,  
(betrayal)

esp. fear of failure, defeat, humiliation,  
surviving "fear of nuc war: as if  
we strike first"

"and" "being struck"

Choice of Evil  
Choice of Lesser Evil

(Choice of Greater Evil  
- or high risk of Greater Evil -  
to avoid Greater Evil  
Greater Humiliation  
" Loss (Separation)

(There are separations, mutilations (torments)  
"wound" disfigurements)  
the physical death / annihilation;  
sufferings worse than sins / murders.

see Quran  
"death - news"

"We have ways of making you ...  
talk;  
... more than 'talk'!"

see early Bush agreement  
with Stevenson, a Democrat!  
+ Ball / Stevenson conversation  
after crisis!

Did JFK think he could  
use "U Thant Plan" after  
a shoot-down of low-level recon  
to Castro? Could US "convince" them?



What did hanks think of ("O" - 2 mg)  
risk of horizontal etc?  
and if it occurred?

But beer was not necessary to  
JFK's ultimate (unless, it was  
for JFK!) - on the terms he offered.

It could ("should," according  
to hanks, and most "national vector  
analysts") have come from courage,  
or from "calm appraisal of  
balance of forces." On as it did: from a  
combination of beer and beer-of-failure, stubbornness, drill, etc.

Witness for K, if he was  
a "calm national vector"; but beer  
helped, and may (hanks) have  
been necessary.

i.e. burrowing,  
giving "normal  
modernity"

(JFK allowed "normal modernity"  
to outweigh his stale  
some pros & cons)  
on lat. night - therefore won.

What makes K backlash propping & probabilistic  
to do (it is not, for hanks!)

is normal! McGB, McN (Bill?) (and?)

1) Thin belief is effective significance: MAAD.

2) His "toughness" tell the. ("admirable; normal; predictable  
boldness")

3) Why didn't back down - drinking this beer;  
he won't a concord; why did he?

4) Thin belief is SU control (of SAMs,  
AA (?) & minors; so why the  
need (he had 48 hours; could  
have "used" all day Sunday...)  
(Why did he seem so soon? - chicken  
and condition  
machines to deal,  
if necessary.)

→ 5) Thin knowledge of this beer / characteristic (degree of) willingness to back  
down (if necessary)

Academy built  
to think and to  
"offer"

Along the should, according to  
national do, and to nat. vector  
analysts (w/ SU choice).

Thin belief is SU control (of SAMs,  
AA (?) & minors; so why the  
need (he had 48 hours; could  
have "used" all day Sunday...)  
(Why did he seem so soon? - chicken  
and condition  
machines to deal,  
if necessary.)

— Does B think it inevitable, certain, that  
K would back down? see 235

— Does he think RFK's ult. added nothing  
to the prob/risk that US could strike  
(by Monday!) if K did not desist in his misdeeds?  
("statement of fact" : i.e. (that) did not change situation, US probs.  
expression of it being clarified or combined it for SU.)  
(Was airstrike planned for late Monday  
(48 hrs) — unlikely — or for first light  
Tuesday?  
When operation?

Otherwise, he should recognize (not "deny")  
that JFK's immediate response to press was  
to increase conditional prob of US strike (= war)  
if K did not rescue within 24<sup>48</sup> hours  
(which JFK did not, much, expect!)

RFK did not say: "We can (probably) not  
hold back JCS more than 48 hrs, although  
we will try ~~to~~ our hardest."

Nor did he believe (what he said) that  
there could not be a deal along the lines of  
a public trade.

(Wf is ref. to a conf deleted?!



The defects of this book — if  
admitted & corrected — do not  
support the tone of condemnation  
and arrogance.

but not always <sup>adequate</sup> justifications -  
even if action "seems",





B seems to think ~~OSAS~~ JFK + K  
acted symmetrically — both made  
(equal) concessions.

Why didn't K answer (as as to  
get public track, what he'd asked)  
with his "Statement of Facts" of what  
would follow US air-strike, or invasion?

Why make "blame" of after crisis?

←

he probability that deep nuclear crises will be avoided or, at the very least, that they will be resolved peacefully?

Although informed opinion on the contemporary pertinence of the missile crisis is by no means unanimous, the received wisdom is clear: The episode is generally believed to be pretty irrelevant to present concerns and policies. There is a superficially compelling folk wisdom to this view, which resides in what most observers take to be the self-evident truth of the following three propositions: First, it is simply inconceivable that any high-ranking decision-making body (like President Kennedy's EXCOMM) will in any future nuclear crisis have almost a full week of splendid isolation in which to plan its course of action, away from the press and from most of the other multitudinous, day-to-day official responsibilities of its members. In the post-Watergate world of Washington public life, a secret simply cannot usually be kept much beyond the conclusion of the meeting at which its content and secrecy are declared and agreed to.<sup>1</sup> Second, it is very unlikely that any future superpower crisis will occur within a context in which the United States conventional force superiority is anything like as great as it was in the Caribbean in 1962; and there is virtually no prospect whatever that the strategic nuclear balance will ever again favor the Americans (or either side) as heavily as it did during the missile crisis.<sup>2</sup> The Soviets have caught up with or surpassed the United States in most of the categories which found them wanting militarily in October, 1962. Third and finally, present command and control procedures

NO!

(see  
Hoyt)

NO

yes



and systems are vastly different than they were in 1962. In that (conceptually and operationally far off) era, most nuclear bombs were carried on relatively slow and recallable bombers, and the nuclear command systems of the two superpowers were far less complex and tightly interlocked than they are today.<sup>3</sup>

Thus decision-time has been reduced by many orders of magnitude while the enormous, virtual doomsday machine, as many view it, remains in place, though with many more (theoretically) limited nuclear options than in 1962, when there were few, if any.

The conclusion usually drawn from attending to these differences between the objective nuclear conditions of 1962 and those of the present is straightforwardly pessimistic: Our present world is in many respects a far more dangerous world than that which provided the context for the Cuban missile crisis. In fact, <sup>e.g.?</sup> many students of nuclear crisis management have been driven to conclude from these considerations that the next nuclear crisis is quite unlikely to be manageable at all. Or put another way, if the superpowers ever again find one another on the brink of war, the odds are much higher than in 1962 that the world will be blown up as a result.<sup>4</sup> In other words, we needn't look too hard or too long at the missile crisis for lessons which are applicable to our present world. Next time, this view holds, there will probably be no EXCOMM, no security derived from American tactical and strategic advantages and very little time to interpret and assess information about the crisis resulting, very probably, in each side having a completely irresistible, fear-driven urge to preempt the nuclear

who?

see 1973!

forces of the other.<sup>5</sup> Thus, it is argued, the peaceful resolution of the missile crisis tells us little or nothing about how to resolve the next nuclear crisis. This, in outline, is the more or less paradigmatic argument for the policy-irrelevance of the missile crisis. We should not expect the next nuclear crisis to be anywhere near as amenable to leaders' attempts to manage it.

It is important to appreciate, however, how deeply this view is embedded in the rational/irrational psychology of avoiding nuclear war. The fundamental psychological proposition on which it is based is this: The missile crisis was resolved either in spite of, or because of, the widespread irrationality of the key actors, and this irrationality was mainly a function of the fear of being attacked, producing stress and psychopathology, and ultimately clouded perception and poor judgment. The managers of the missile crisis were irrational and they were lucky. Moreover, each of the three central differences between the nuclear world of 1962 and the present - time to plan, the balance of power and time to decide - indicates that in any future nuclear crisis, leaders will be far less rational than those who, by "plain dumb luck," are said to have stumbled into a peaceful resolution in October, 1962. Why? Because for all these reasons having to do with the vast differences between our nuclear world today and that of 1962, the psychological stress on leaders will be without precedent. According to Lebow:

not  
JFK's!

The stress generated by a nuclear crisis would almost certainly surpass that of the most acute crises of the past.



Even the healthiest political and military leaders have strong incentives to deny the likelihood of such an event. Indeed, what little evidence we possess suggests that this is just what happens. The combination of the incredible stress of a nuclear crisis and the efforts of leaders beforehand to deny the likelihood of such an event seems a sure recipe for psychological disaster. A nuclear crisis would almost certainly produce some kind of unexpected and dysfunctional behavior. Cuba certainly did.<sup>6</sup>

*York*  
*"efforts"*

For all these reasons, Lebow believes, "nuclear crisis management may be an oxymoron."<sup>7</sup> The psychological devolution that occurred during the missile crisis, which Lebow takes to be quite pronounced and dangerous, may appear trivial when compared to the frenzied, panicky (or perhaps paralyzed) behavior one is likely to encounter next time, because there will be almost no time to plan policy, there will be no comfort in the White House and Pentagon due to American military superiority, and the time-urgency to decide to launch will be unprecedented and extreme. A graphic depiction of why this is expected is represented in Figure 8.

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Insert Figure 8 Here

---

The argument is that, with regard to the missile crisis and the next nuclear crisis, the points of greatest miscalculation, misperception, mistrust and subsequent risk of nuclear war will be so discrepant as virtually to insure rampant fear of attack,

diff. reasons

-232-

irrationality and resulting catastrophe. This is all perfectly consistent with the principles of rational/irrational actor psychology, when they are applied to the very substantial differences between the nuclear worlds of 1962 and of today. Together they constitute a coherent argument for the policy-<sup>NO</sup>irrelevance of the missile crisis and for extreme pessimism about the prospects for nuclear crises management.

But as I have tried to demonstrate, the rational/irrational actor psychologists simply cannot account for what happened to the managers of the missile crisis - for their nascent fear of nuclear inadvertence, for the evolution of a very intense (and intensifying) crystal ball effect, and for the resulting tacit, mutual understanding of leaders on both sides that they must grasp control of the situation and bring it immediately to a peaceful resolution. <sup>as in MUNICIT (for SU?)</sup> Furthermore, the difference between the implications of the rational/irrational actor and phenomenological psychologies widens to uncommensurability if we consider the differing psychological analyses of the worlds of 1962 and the present one. For viewed within the phenomenological perspective, the differences most often cited seem likely to produce a quicker, greater fear of nuclear inadvertence than that which occurred in October, 1962. This conclusion is illustrated in Figure 9.

yes!

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Insert Figure 9 Here

---

It is identical to the previous figure, except for one decisive



exception: The vertical axis in this case contains feared nuclear inadvertence, rather than fear of calculated preemptive or escalatory attack. It has the singular virtues of being consistent with what is known or can plausibly be imagined about the evolution of the psychological life of the key managers of the missile crisis, and it also correctly predicts its (peaceful) resolution: It suggests that in our present nuclear world - with less time to plan, with forces more truly balanced and with much less time to decide - the point of tacit, mutual understanding of the need for peaceful resolution is likely to be reached much more quickly and profoundly than it was in 1962. Why? Because leaders are aware of these facts and also of the very high likelihood that any nuclear war will be to everyone's disadvantage. And this may be cause for some relative optimism about the prospects for nuclear crisis management. At least, it is far from clear that the prevailing pessimism is justified.

*as CF, PE, etc. (ASAT) should not be blocked; or is there a special kind of inadvertence*

*IF AT ALL!*

*MORE/AS LIKELY? SURELY?*

*well... (on this, he bases his prescriptions?)*

Even students of nuclear crisis management less given to jeremiads of the sort one finds in the recent work of Jerivs, Lebow, Stein, Janis, Bracken and Blair still tend to reach highly pessimistic conclusions about prospects for the enterprise, and it is illuminating, I think, to examine why this is so. The case of Alexander George, arguably the most influential and distinguished student of international crisis management, is particularly instructive. After devoting much of the past quarter-century to the examination of crisis management, George has reached the following conclusion:

...crisis management will remain an art - and a difficult art at that rather than a science. Perhaps the most important lesson to be learned from past experience is that there are important, often severe limits on the possibility of transforming military force into a highly refined, discriminating <sup>NUCs?</sup> instrument of diplomacy and coercive bargaining in crisis situations.<sup>8</sup>

"not to  
action  
would  
be better"

It is important to notice three characteristics of George's analysis. First, is his pessimism. It is, in his view, simply and demonstrably very difficult to "manage" situations as complex, volatile and important as international crises. George's case studies of deterrence and "coercive diplomacy" show repeatedly how difficult is the task of shaping international crises to one's advantage. Second, George's analysis assumes straightforwardly that the rational/irrational actor psychology describes the psychological parameters within which international crises ought to be understood. In important respects, George's theoretical framework for analyzing crisis management is an attempt to refine Schelling's rational actor psychology into a more variegated and useful conceptual tool, one which is more sensitive to the sources of irrationality in political actors. As George has written on many occasions, coercive bargaining (or diplomacy) is understood to be the attempt to persuade the adversary by influencing his utility calculations (and thus his will to fight) via various forms of signalling, bargaining and negotiating.<sup>9</sup> George has also, like the many other more or less self-conscious practitioners of

will?



IGB's verbal limit: It <sup>can</sup> help  
(esp. for "normal, non-crisis" degradation...  
So far as: prospect of bargaining...

the rational/irrational actor psychology, had a good deal to say about the ways and extent to which crisis-induced fear and stress might degrade rationality in a crisis and result in poor decisions.<sup>10</sup> Finally, and most importantly for our purposes George, like his colleagues, makes no qualitative distinction between a conventional war-threatening crisis and a nuclear war-threatening crisis. He is a thoroughgoing advocate of a sweeping case-comparative method in which the coercive bargaining model provides the framework and international crises of all sorts provide the data.

These three characteristics - pessimism about prospects for crisis management, deep embeddedness in the rational/irrational actor psychology, and belief in the qualitative psychological equivalence of international crises, conventional and nuclear - all figure heavily in George's interpretation of the resolution of the missile crisis. In his view, by (what turned out to be) the final weekend of the crisis, coercive diplomacy was beginning to break down, partly because of stress and partly because of certain irresistible pressures on the President coming from within the military, the public, the Congress and his EXCOMM, to escalate the crisis into a shooting war.<sup>11</sup>

This leads George to conclude that, in fact, the final weekend (especially Saturday, October 27) was quite clearly the most dangerous point in the crisis. For it was then that the President issued (what George takes to be) the "ultimatum" which, fortunately but not necessarily predictably, Khrushchev chose to accept.<sup>12</sup> One cannot escape the impression in

see 2204

will?

George's writing on the missile crisis that its mode of resolution remains for him somewhat unacceptable and even a bit mysterious. The "ultimatum" seems to him to be imprudent and promising a distinctly uncertain chance for success. President Kennedy seemed, in George's view, to be in a much bigger hurry to conclude the crisis <sup>with a win</sup> forcefully than was rationally warranted. In any case the "ultimatum" - a contingent declaration of (at least) limited war against Cuba and perhaps the Soviet Union as well - indicates to George that crisis management had begun to dissolve and that the crisis, save for Khrushchev's acquiescence, would probably have ended in war, perhaps in a nuclear war. In this way George reaches a highly sophisticated version of the "plain dumb luck" hypothesis about why the missile crisis was resolved as it was. And this, of course, is cold comfort indeed for aspiring nuclear crisis managers - practitioners of this "difficult art" as George calls it. No one wants to have to rely on luck, on fortuitous irrationality, next time crisis management erodes in a nuclear crisis. *(no one would say it was rational for K to back down!)*

But did crisis management really break down in October, 1962? George builds a powerful defense of this position but it is important to recognize, once again, that this conclusion and its pessimistic implications, are contingent on one's acceptance of George's second and third assumptions: That the rational/irrational actor psychology provides the correct angle of vision into the crisis, and that it did not differ in any important way from other international crises. This can be illustrated with reference to the three beliefs which George



takes to be the psychological prerequisites to any decision in a crisis to go to large-scale nuclear war: (1) The crisis is out of control; (2) war has become virtually inevitable; and (3) there is a premium on going first.<sup>13</sup> According to George, "these beliefs did begin to emerge in President Kennedy's mind during the course of the Cuban missile crisis."<sup>14</sup> This is George's concise rendering of a kind of crystal ball effect. But notice that it is above all a psychological scenario for intensifying fear of calculated attack, not of inadvertence. This must be because George believes that the President perceived some possible advantage in a nuclear first-strike (the third canonical belief) and thus he must also have assumed that his Soviet counterpart also believed this. But, as I have tried to demonstrate, it is very unlikely that by the conclusion of the crisis either Kennedy or Khrushchev believed this. The psychological evidence derived from attempting to put ourselves in their shoes, unaware of the outcome and intensely aware of their vulnerability, suggests strongly that neither leader believed this. Neither believed that the other was keen for a nuclear first strike. Rather, both greatly feared nuclear inadvertence. Thus George contends that crisis management was breaking down by October 27, 1962, while I would contend that full-scale nuclear crisis management had taken effect by then, with both sides recognizing their common enemy, inadvertence, and both sides taking steps to prevent it by resolving the crisis peacefully. This, finally, is why George is pessimistic about prospects for nuclear crisis management: Nuclear crises

good

? (3?)

NO

OK

US FO  
(JFK  
"fear"  
"long" to  
do this)  
or long  
to reject  
this!

in his view, are like conventional crises; when crisis management breaks down in such episodes, leaders tend to believe there is an advantage to going first; this is what began to happen in the missile crisis, which was resolved not so much because of successful crisis management, but because of a more *yes* purely military "ultimatum"; and this is why we should not permit ourselves to be hopeful about rational nuclear crisis management working next time. For in George's view, it didn't even work in the missile crisis, when conditions favored it far more than is likely in any future confrontation between the superpowers.

But viewed from within the framework of a phenomenological psychology, the missile crisis seems to lead to far less pessimistic conclusions because we assume, as the key actors in that event almost surely assumed, that the resolution of the missile crisis - a nuclear crisis - must be played out according to a set of rules unique to itself. As feared nuclear inadvertence became the common enemy, as the imaginatively shattered crystal balls seemed to yield nothing but unjustifiable catastrophe, nuclear crisis management, or what we ought probably to call nuclear crisis resolution, really began *NO: winning, not just ending* to occur. This process began the morning of Wednesday, October 24, when the first Soviet ships steamed toward the American quarantine line. It was in those moments, according to Robert Kennedy, that he and his colleagues knew they had passed from a crisis to a nuclear crisis, a whole new ball game:

I think those few minutes were the time of gravest concern



He does not say — it is true — "I was totally  
defeated, so I surrendered." Surprised!

Very informative.



for the President. Was the world on the brink of a holocaust? Was it an error? A mistake? Was there something further that should have been done? Or not done? His hand went up to his face and covered his mouth. He opened and closed his fist. His face seemed drawn, his eyes pained, almost gray. We stared at each other across the table.<sup>15</sup>

When Khrushchev ordered his ships to halt and reverse course, the President and his advisors knew nuclear crisis resolution had begun. <sup>But...</sup> Looking back on the event, as the participants could not at the time, I think it is clear that the subsequent exchange of letters between the leaders and the peaceful resolution are just what one might have expected if one had known for sure about the mutuality of feared nuclear inadvertence. But of course they had no such assurance. They were working in the dark. They were inventing nuclear crisis resolution as they went along. That is why the tension once again became unbearable on October 27: They wondered whether they would beat the ogre of inadvertence to the finish line. They hoped they would but feared they would not. We know they did. And the reason for this, in one turn of phrase, is because by October 27, both leaderships understood that the American message of that evening was indeed a "statement of fact." <sup>NO</sup> They had been learning this lesson since October 24. There is some reason to believe, I think, that Khrushchev was delighted to receive that message, <sup>NO</sup> delighted to take to the airwaves and accept it. In the last volume of his memoirs, Khrushchev says: "I would like to pay my respects to Kennedy... together we avoided disaster."<sup>16</sup> And so they did.

*of course it is (if not a bluff); but, of "facts as  
the case. He... moved, he... the... statement... and... action*



My gloss on these pivotal events is, I think, consistent with our best guess as to the evolving psychological life of the main participants during the crisis. It also leads, in my view, to a certain amount of optimism about our leaders' ability in another nuclear crisis to escape without a war. I want to reiterate that we shouldn't call this task "nuclear crisis management." Lebos may be right to conclude that this expression is <sup>or just plain moronic.</sup> oxymoronic. For what seems to have happened in the missile crisis is rather the reverse of rational crisis management: The powerful, mutual belief that the crisis cannot be managed, together with the conviction that war is simply \* NOT JFK! unacceptable, led to nuclear crisis resolution. Leaders learned this quickly in 1962. I see no reason to believe future leaders will be less capable of this sort of rapid, unequivocal nuclear learning. For the conclusions they must reach, deriving from their imaginatively shattering nuclear crystal balls, will be perfectly consistent with what they ought by then already to believe: That a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. ?

This conclusion should not be misinterpreted as praise for the virtues of the visceral appreciation, learned in crises, of living under a regime of mutual assured destruction, or as an argument for complacency in our efforts to improve our control during crises of the weapons of mass destruction which reside in the arsenals of the superpowers. The possibility of accidental nuclear detonation, and of misinterpretation of such an event

He did not accept, or perhaps  
to consider, K's thesis for  
"peaceful settlement" - but  
as basis for discussion

Contrary to B, JFK did not make  
out war (as a US response, chosen  
by him).  
(on last night - whether he thought / intended to do so).

but hope we don't find the ?!  
on 242, 244, 233

is real and we must continue to look for ways to prevent these events from occurring.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, only a fool would guarantee that every nuclear crisis will be gotten through without a war. But we should note that a reasonably optimistic conclusion derives not only from the peaceful resolution of the missile crisis, it is also consistent with the evolution of what Joseph Nye has called "nuclear learning" since the missile crisis.<sup>18</sup> In our apparent enthusiasm for drawing the direst possible conclusions about everything we think we have learned about our luck in the missile crisis, and about the greater luck we believe we may need next time, we should not fail to notice that a good portion of the tacit understanding of feared inadvertence in the missile crisis seems to have been reasonably well understood by a generation of subsequent leaders, none of whom has had to endure anything remotely resembling the nuclear danger of October, 1962. Viewed in this way, the missile crisis becomes the seminal learning exercise of the nuclear age, the point at which our leaders first learned with heart and mind to (as the American Catholic Bishops put it in 1983) "say 'no' to nuclear war."<sup>19</sup> It is also, in my view, an event from which we must continue to learn. As the event fades into ancient history, by the standards of the institutional memory of the government, increased effort must be expended to strip away the legend from the psychological reality of October, 1962 precisely because the nuclear world we have created contains far more opportunities for nuclear inadvertence than that of 1962.

well?

Ha

1973

"just say no."

One of the important lessons we ought to draw from the



missile crisis, viewed from within the phenomenological psychological perspective is to be very cautious about radical schemes for, in effect, trying to turn back the "nuclear calendar" to 1962, or even to the pre-nuclear era. <sup>(Hoffman)</sup> For just as the widespread deep pessimism about prospects for nuclear crisis management is embedded in the dubious application of the rational/irrational actor psychologies to the nuclear context, so too are many of the most popular visions of alternative nuclear worlds. They are fully compatible with, and in many instances actually derived from, the fundamental requirement of rational/irrational actor psychology: To reduce the probability of fear of catastrophic attack, of stress, of irrationality and thus of the felt need to preempt or escalate to nuclear war. Consider, for example, the following four alternative nuclear worlds, all of which are generally believed by their advocates to have significant implications for improved nuclear crisis management:

1. Very Deep Cuts: The physical impossibility of massive nuclear catastrophe.<sup>20</sup> *(This would mean with 99% cuts! (similar to '62!))*
2. Defense Dominance: Confidence in our ability to defend ourselves against a nuclear attack.<sup>21</sup> *2nd strike? Deterrence FS? Deterrence not denied*
3. "Lop-off-the-Top": Rid ourselves of all large-yield nuclear weapons, increasing the prospects that any nuclear war will be more discriminant, resulting in less "collateral damage" to non-combatants.<sup>22</sup> *of disarm. non-peace*
4. No-first-use: Get to a mutual, credible pledge never to be the first to use nuclear weapons in combat, no matter what.<sup>23</sup>

*Anti-CF/FS impact? Freeze? Just Ban?*

Now, viewed from within the precepts of the rational/irrational actor psychological perspective, all such "worlds" should result in increased <sup>NOT, STABILIZATION</sup> rationalization of nuclear crises. Presumably, without the present great fear of catastrophe in the event of a war between the superpowers, stress will be reduced and decision-making made less emotional, more rational - importantly, more like what it seems to be like in non-nuclear crisis.

NO!

But is this the sort of nuclear world we ought to desire? the psychological evidence of the missile crisis suggests that it is not. For viewed within the phenomenological perspective, all the "worlds" which may seem to their advocates to rationalize nuclear policy-making may actually reduce the likelihood of resolving a nuclear crisis peacefully. Why? Because either singly or together they constitute a partial repeal of the crisis-induced visceral fear of mutual assured destruction (MAD) <sup>which?</sup> which in my view led to the peaceful resolution in 1962 and has kept the superpowers far from the brink of war ever since. A comparison of the differing broad policies, or visions of alternative nuclear "worlds" deriving from the incommensurable psychologies of avoiding nuclear war, is depicted in Figure 10.

So - <sup>now</sup> ~~Target~~ is good?  
(Drops into ~~premise~~ MAD)\*

---

Insert Figure 10 Here

---

If fear of imminent attack, and the stress and psychological degradation into irrationality is the focus of concern, then all

& but fear of induction is enhanced by  
1) FS/~~for~~ ~~the~~ cap.; 2) ~~unhappiness~~ (but FS cap); 3) FU ~~that~~  
4) CP ~~in the~~ ~~the~~



the alternative worlds ought to appear, in principle, desirable psychologically.<sup>24</sup> But if feared nuclear inadvertence is regarded as the key to peace in the missile crisis, and in future superpower crises, then the desirability of these worlds is far from obvious. And while there may be other sorts of reasons for preferring movement in the direction of one or more of these worlds, enhanced ability within them to resolve nuclear crises peacefully cannot, on the basis of psychological evidence deriving from the missile crisis, be one of them. The psychological facts - in the peacefully resolved missile crisis and in the peaceful nuclear world since - will not bear this out.

One of the standard arguments put forth by advocates of the nuclear status quo is that any radical reduction in the risk of nuclear catastrophe, along the lines suggested in the various alternative worlds, may once again make the world safe for major conventional war. Stanley Hoffmann has been particularly insistent on this point. Writing in response to the October, 1986 summit between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev in Iceland, a meeting at which many radical alternative nuclear futures apparently were discussed as a matter of course, Hoffman said this about nuclear weapons:

However convincing the abstract arguments that the weapons are "unusable" because of the damage that would result from the other side's retaliation, uncertainty about their possible use acts as a deterrent. Historical evidence shows, alas, that conventional deterrence has been far less successful:

Desirability of instability (not just, stable MAD)

-245-

See even today the record of wars among non-nuclear powers. A "conventional" world would not live under the threat of total nuclear destruction, but conventional wars between the major powers might become far more likely again. Is that what we want?<sup>25</sup>

✓ B's!

Hoffmann's question is entirely rhetorical. His answer is an unequivocal "no." But advocates of the various alternative worlds have obviously been unwilling to agree with this. Interestingly, radicals often answer "yes" to Hoffmann's question, by appealing to the same data: Failures of conventional deterrence. Whereas Hoffmann's attention is drawn to what he takes to be the great discrepancy between a conventional world almost perpetually at war and a peaceful (or at least stable and unwarlike) nuclear world, radicals tend to see in examples like the Middle East, Central America and Indo-China proof that, sooner or later, the same fate will befall the nuclear superpowers. Deterrence will fail, only this time the world will be destroyed as a result. As Jonathan Schell has argued, "...a holocaust not only might occur but will occur - if not today, then tomorrow, if not this year, then the next."<sup>26</sup> Both sides in this debate appeal to history for their evidence, the difference being that (what Hoffmann calls) "traditionalists" argue that the stability of nuclear deterrence is a qualitatively different proposition from the conventional variety, while the "radicals" believe that the same unfortunate law governs both: If weapons exist, they will be used.<sup>27</sup>

and US  
public

will...



In order for Hoffmann's argument to be correct and convincing, it must be shown that nuclear deterrence between the superpowers involves an emergent dimension, one which significantly transforms the nature and volatility of the superpower relationship. McGeorge Bundy has argued in just this way: Nuclear deterrence is fundamentally different from conventional deterrence because the former possesses an existential dimension.<sup>28</sup> This has been widely misinterpreted by people on all sides of the nuclear debate to mean that, according to Bundy, nuclear weapons deter by means of their existence alone, disconnected from any ability or willingness ever to use them, under any circumstances. But this interpretation is nonesensical. Demonstrable duds do not deter! What Bundy appears to have meant, at a minimum, is that nuclear deterrence operates in a manner and to an extent which goes far beyond what one could expect from figuratively adding up the capability and credibility behind specific threats to deny the aims of an adversary or to retaliate. Something more, something emergent, is involved.

But \*

But what is this emergent quality and how does it work? What fine - gained sense are we to make, for example, of Bundy's dual claim that "existential deterrence had a powerful day-to-day effect on both governments in the course of the Cuban missile crisis," and that "nothing whatever in the succeeding 20 years has weakened the compelling power of existential deterrence over decision-makers on both sides."<sup>29</sup> What I believe we can begin to see, based on the phenomenological

OK

mutual CF,  
emerging

\* he comes this to "parity" in 1961 —  
which is too far.

analysis put forth here, is a glimpse of the psychological foundations of existential deterrence. It operates so powerfully because the threat and fear of nuclear inadvertence exists, and is believed to exist powerfully in a nuclear crisis, and operates by means of what I have called the intensifying crystal ball effect. What this implies functionally is that Hoffmann is probably right to believe that nuclear deterrence is many orders of magnitude more stable than conventional deterrence, and for this reason: Whereas a conventional crisis tends to bring on fear of attack and a psychological spiral leading to greatly raised risk of war, a nuclear crisis will tend to bring on fear of inadvertence and a mutual, powerful need to resolve the crisis peacefully. Thus, existential deterrence comes into play not because nuclear weapons exist, but because the possibility of irremediable catastrophe exists, and in a nuclear crisis leaders will believe this possibility has become an uncomfortably high and rising probability. And this is why we should be very cautious about embracing radical alterations in the situation of nuclear deterrence: They <sup>yes, but</sup> may radically reduce existential deterrence, transforming a superpower crisis into a (more or less) conventional crisis, thus eliciting fears and behavior consistent with those of leaders in conventional crises and actually <sup>maybe, however...</sup> raising the risk of nuclear war. This, in my view, is why Hoffmann's question should be rhetorical: This is not (or should not be) what we want. <sup>(e.g. non-nuclear world. Or world without nuclear war)</sup>

NOT ONLY

OR  
REJECTING/  
POSTPONING  
THEM!

Perhaps the notion of existential deterrence, and the related idea of existential crisis, can help us to appreciate,



if not fully to resolve, the paradoxical views on these matters of Thomas Schelling. For more than a generation; there has been no more articulate and influential spokesman than Schelling for the rational actor psychological approach to nuclear strategy and arms control.<sup>30</sup> At the heart of Schelling's seminal contribution is his attempt to rationalize what he referred to as the "reciprocal fear of surprise attack." He sought "to analyze whether and how this phenomenon can arise through a rational calculation of probabilities or a rational choice of strategy by two players who appreciate the nature of their predicament."<sup>31</sup> Schelling concluded that this was difficult (though not impossible) to conceive, but by far the easiest way to "model" the spiraling reciprocal fear of surprise attack was simply to add an element of what he called "nervousness."<sup>32</sup> In this way, Schelling anticipated by many years the arguments of those whose psychological approach is more centrally concerned with the dangers of irrationality and who, by the way, often caricature Schelling as insufficiently sensitive to the ways in which rationality can be degraded in a crisis. In fact, "nervousness," or what Schelling also called the "physiological" aspect of the problem of maintaining deterrence in a crisis, concerned him from the start. Like his colleagues among the rational/irrational actor psychologists, Schelling has long worried about the escalating, reciprocal fear of attack in crises, something Robert Jervis would later dub the "spiral model," and a process that Richard Ned Lebow and Irving Janis now believe is fueled by what they call "defensive avoidance."<sup>33</sup>

Schelling may not have undertaken extensive case studies, as have those who followed him, and his writing is not as embedded as theirs' in straightforwardly psychological literatures. But Schelling was there first - across the whole spectrum of concern that typifies the rational/irrational psychologies. He is still there. As he wrote in 1984, "the fundamental danger of strategic nuclear war arises from the ...potential self-fulfilling prophecy that mutual suspicion has reached an intolerable level at which preemptive action is inevitable."<sup>34</sup>

And yet, in spite of Schelling's card-carrying membership in the society for promoting rational/irrational actor psychology, in spite of his concern over the irrationalizing effects of fear of attack in a crisis, there is no stronger advocate than Schelling for the nuclear status quo. He doesn't believe numbers matter much, one way or the other, though he tends to favor high numbers such as those that characterize the current superpower arsenals. He dislikes strategic defense. He is firmly opposed to "lopping off the top" of the arsenals in such a way as to reduce the probability that any nuclear war would lead inexorably to mutual assured destruction. He is not very interested in no-first-use, though he fails to see how it can do any good.<sup>35</sup> Why is this? Why, in a strategic thinker who is greatly concerned about the irrationalizing effects of fear of attack in a nuclear crisis, do we find a wholehearted endorsement of the status quo, a situation deemed by many advocates of rational/irrational actor psychologies to be one of



almost unprecedented peacetime nuclear danger? The answer is simple but astonishing: Schelling does not believe that, under conditions of mutual assured destruction (and the emphasis for Schelling is on "assured") fear will arise. "Fear can promote hostility," he writes, "and fear can lead to impetuosity in a crisis...but...if the consequences of transgression are plainly bad...we can take the consequences for granted and call it a 'balance of prudence.'"<sup>36</sup> It is at this point that Schelling likens managing a nuclear crisis to pedestrians waiting for a speeding bus to pass (see Chapter IV). "There is no fear," he says, "they just know better" than to step in front of it.<sup>37</sup> According to Schelling, "designing weapons that are least vulnerable to preemptive attack is the fundamental way to build confidence."<sup>38</sup> A MAD world, a world Schelling and his colleagues helped to design in the 1950s and 1960s, accomplishes this nicely. There is no fear, only prudence. So, Schelling asks as rhetorically as Hoffmann, why mess with it?

One wonders what veterans of President Kennedy's EXCOMM during the missile crisis would or do make of Schelling's analogy between managing a nuclear crisis and waiting at the curb for a bus to pass. My guess is that they would scarcely recognize it as an analogy. Perhaps if the bus were going 500 miles per hour, perhaps if it was being driven by a band of bomb-carrying, lunatic terrorists, perhaps if its wheels were about to fly off, and perhaps if the pedestrian desperately had somehow to keep the bus from crashing - perhaps then, after several drastic revisions in the analogy such as these, the two

situations might seem at least remotely analogous. But in introducing these factors, which emphasize unpredictability, danger, loss of control and inadvertence, we automatically re-introduce fear into the picture. Not fear of attack, thus not the reciprocal fear of surprise attack that so concerns Schelling and his colleagues, but fear of inadvertence - in the case of interest, of inadvertent nuclear war. But this forces us to conclude, I believe, that a nuclear crisis bears almost no psychological resemblance to the general picture Schelling paints of it.

In a previous chapter (VII), I borrowed a phrase from George Ball's adaptation of Eliot's "Dry Salvages" and applied it to the members of the EXCOMM themselves, particularly to their understanding of events as they have looked backward, at the missile crisis. According to Ball, "we had the experience but missed the meaning."<sup>39</sup> In Schelling, conversely, we seem to have come upon a thinker who "missed the experience, but got the meaning," more or less. I think his overall conclusion, arguing for great caution in altering the nuclear status quo, is borne out by the results of the missile crisis. But this is not, as Schelling would have it, because fear was adaptively eliminated from the psychological scene. Fear of attack was not a factor in the resolution of the crisis, but in its stead a new kind of fear arose, a fear as intense and powerful as any fear of attack - fear of inadvertent nuclear war. It was the nuclear "environment," as Schelling called it in 1966, that came back to haunt, but ultimately I think to save, the managers of the Cuban missile crisis. They were rational and prudent, as Schelling

NO



would predict, but because of, rather than in spite of, their fear.

What of the missile crisis veterans themselves? Where do their preferences fit into the matrix of Figure 10 (above)? Here the paradoxical nature of this discussion deepens even further. For while Schelling's preferences are all on the side of the status quo of MAD, the EXCOMM members' views quite clearly are not. To take only the two most visible examples, McGeorge Bundy and Robert McNamara are both thoroughgoing advocates of no-first-use and McNamara is on record, in addition, as a proponent of very deep cuts in the nuclear arsenals of the superpowers.<sup>40</sup> Why is this? Why do these former top-level policy makers, having lived through the most intense and fearful experience of their public lives, now favor measures which would, in principle, reduce fear of inadvertent nuclear war in a deep crisis - that is, reduce by a good deal the fuel which seemed to have driven the engine of resolution?

*before the crisis*

The answer is, I think, no less simple than the answer to the Schelling conundrum, and no less interesting once some of its implications are grasped. Quite simply, these men, and doubtless many of their former colleagues as well, "had the experience;" they recall in their various ways what the feeling was like, with everything, perhaps, on the line, with control obviously evaporating and time running out on them. From that perspective, remembering what it was like to look forward, into the nuclear-abyss-that-might be, rather than backward, at the (hypothetical)nuclear-abyss-that never-was, they simply do not want any group of leaders ever again to face so much uncertainty

because the belief is not certain, in fact, to step back -  
if that was not, yet! and the fact is not as much  
reason!

-253-

in the face of such grave nuclear danger. They remember, to re-invoke Schelling's favored analogy, the bus bearing down on them; they remember thinking that they might not find a way out. They recall, most importantly, the overwhelming sense of the contingency of everything that transpired that final weekend of the crisis, and with it the overpowering feeling that it did not have to turn out as it did. We all know that. They feel it. They know it in the manner of direct, lived acquaintanceship. They know - many of them recall believing firmly - that they might have had a nuclear war, sometime during the week of October 29-Nov 3, 1962. They might have, but they didn't. They know that degree of fear in a personal manner. It is hardly surprising to me therefore, that many of the participants have much greater difficulty than a Stanley Hoffmann or a Thomas Schelling in wholeheartedly praising the nuclear status quo. Hoffmann and Schelling, like the rest of us, look back on an unprecedented period of nuclear peace made possible, we believe, and potential destruction! by MAD. The managers of the missile crisis see this too. But they also see and feel a warp in this mostly seamless web of nuclear peace, a point in October, 1962 when a nuclear war seemed to be much too close for comfort.

WELL?  
DOES JGB  
"after  
last night  
"statement"

This, finally, brings me to the connection between existential deterrence and the existential crisis I believed must have occurred to those managing the missile crisis who believed, by that final weekend, that the risk of inadvertent nuclear war was very high, perhaps as high as the President later believed: "between one out of three and even." The



essence of an existential crisis, I take it, is the sudden, powerful and incontrovertible belief that one's position in society, the past, the future, even one's life itself, is extraordinarily precarious. One might cease to exist tomorrow, or the next day, and it would make no difference to the universe in the long run. If this feeling is sufficiently invasive and powerful, one can come to feel as if all one has <sup>and is</sup> done and <sup>may be</sup> striven for <sup>may be</sup> is meaningless, is for naught.<sup>41</sup> I wonder if it is not in this sense that Bundy concludes that existential deterrence had a powerful day-to-day effect on both governments in the course of the Cuban missile crisis."<sup>42</sup> That is, leaders facing the live possibility of inadvertent nuclear holocaust must, if there is any validity at all in the literature on existential crises, have come to realize that, but for fortune, one way or the other, all that they had accomplished and striven for would come to nothing. In fact, all that everyone had accomplished and striven for would come to nothing. McGeorge Bundy said in 1969 that if the missile crisis had come to nuclear war, it would have been a catastrophe "beyond history."<sup>43</sup> This, from a historian. Existential deterrence, therefore, ought to be regarded not merely as a function of the existence of weapons; it is rather due to the ability of those weapons, if used on even a "moderate" scale (compared to what is possible), to render human existence meaningless - past, present and future. The managers of the missile crisis know that this could have happened in October, 1962. One must believe that existential deterrence of just this

on  
one's  
being,  
character;  
one's relation to,  
unintentionally  
of,  
myself

EPT

and poss.  
of war

sort works on no one quite as effectively as it continues to work on the surviving members of the inner circles of John Kennedy and Nikita Khrushchev.

Who is right? Are Hoffmann, Schelling (and myself) right to argue for something like the status quo in nuclear policy, so as to insure that any future nuclear crisis psychologically resembles the missile crisis, full of feared nuclear inadvertence? Or should we give more credence to the considered views of those who "had the experience?" The answer, guaranteed to produce discomfort but unavoidable, is: We should believe both! Throughout this book we have repeatedly come up against a fundamental and, I take it, unbridgeable distinction: Between what Thomas Nagel calls the "view from somewhere" and "the view from nowhere"; between what Kierkegaard referred to as "life lived forwards" and "life understood backwards," and to what William James called "knowledge of acquaintance and "knowledge about." The former all require intentional explanations, the search for an empathic appreciation of the uncertainty of life, as it moves forward. The latter all require more standard, detached, "scientific" explanations. I have emphasized an intentional explanation of the resolution of the missile crisis because the characteristic which is most salient (and most ignored) in that event, fear of nuclear inadvertence, can scarcely be appreciated any other way. But this is not the only way. The congruence of my own views on policy with those of Schelling, who reaches the same point by a very different route, is a case in point.

with CF,  
still more!

on 233



Our conclusions do not, however, quite match up with former EXCOMM members, Bundy and McNamara, though the differences are not, I think, tremendous. }

But rather than urging the readers to choose up sides, I prefer to conclude by urging that respect be paid to the experience, as best we can get into the forward movement of it, of trying to manage the Cuban missile crisis. Part of what men like Bundy and McNamara are saying to the rest of us, I believe, is this: There are limits to how much fear and uncertainty people can stand and those limits were just about reached by October 27, 1962. We must never get (that) close again. Part of the path away from another such event must consist of continuing to bolster deterrence. The fear of nuclear inadvertence is presently <sup>?</sup> irreplaceable as a sobering catalyst to peace in a crisis. But part of the path, I believe these former EXCOMM members are saying, must also consist in trying to transcend nuclear deterrence as we know it. Is this utopian? I think your answer will depend in part on the kind of knowledge you have of what happened psychologically in October, 1962, and its relation to what has happened since. And the closer we get to the psychological "inside" of the crisis, I believe, the more difficult it becomes to answer this question unequivocally. For as one gets inside the phenomenology of the participants, the more I, at least, become convinced that without the sudden and massive intrusion of feared nuclear inadvertence, the missile crisis would have exploded into war - possibly into nuclear war. But also, and quite paradoxically, I believe that we must

and what did that take?!

BY K!

US DID NOT BACK OFF!

& But the risk "was" greater than he could know, then or now, it was as great, or greater, than he felt...

OK

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also learn to respect the views of participants (and others) who hold that we must never again subject our leaders (and ourselves) to anything like the fear that produced the nuclear learning in the missile crisis. The open question for the next generation thus becomes: Can we continue to learn, but without the fear? The answer is likely to remain elusive for a very long time. But until we learn to address the question on its own terms - by getting imaginatively inside the fearful forward movement of the only nuclear crisis we have ever had - we can scarcely even ask the question.



Chapter I: Fear and Learning in a Nuclear Crisis

1. "Anatomy of a Crisis." CBS News special report, October 28, 1962, narrated by Charles Collingwood. Property of CBS News Archives, New York, N.Y.
2. Patrick Pacheco, "The Peace Corps Then and Now," Ladies Home Journal, March 1986, pp. 100-102, 197-198.
3. Harold MacMillan, At the End of the Day: 1961-1963 (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), pp. 214-215.
4. Nikita Khrushchev, "Report on the International Situation," January 16, 1963. Cited in Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Boston: Little-Brown, 1971), p. 212. Theodore C. Sorensen, Kennedy (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 724.

Chapter II: Introduction: The Importance of Recovering Psychological Life in a Nuclear Crisis

1. Robert D. Romanyshyn, Psychological Life: From Science to Metaphor (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1982), pp. 134-136.
2. Thomas Nagel, The View From Nowhere (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). See also Nagel's Mortal Questions (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), especially pp. 53-74.

3. I have attempted systematically to assess the emerging discipline of the psychology of avoiding nuclear war in the following pieces: "'Limited' Nuclear War?: The Unmet Psychological Challenge of the American Catholic Bishops," Science, Technology, and Human Values, 10, No. 4 (Fall, 1985), pp. 3-16; "Toward a Policy-Relevant Psychology of Avoiding Nuclear War: Lessons for Psychologists From the Cuban Missile Crisis," The American Psychologist, (January 1987), pp. 1-18; "Can Psychology Reduce the Risk of Nuclear War?: Reflections of a 'Little Drummer Boy' of Nuclear Psychology," Journal of Humanistic Psychology (Fall 1987); "How Might Psychology Contribute to Reducing the Risk of Nuclear War?, Political psychology (Winter, 1986/87); and "The New Psychology of War and Peace," International Security (Fall/Winter, 1986/87). ✓ A
4. William James, The Principles of Psychology (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), Vol. II, pp. 442-485. ✓ A

Chapter III: Fear of Inadvertent Nuclear War: An Outline of the Argument

1. Robert F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis (New York: Norton, 1971), p. 86.
2. Marc Trachtenberg, ed., "White House Tapes and Minutes of the Cuban Missile Crisis" International Security, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Summer, 1985), pp. 164-203, pp. 201-203.



3. Robert S. McNamara, "Discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis," June 1983 (A videotaped discussion conducted by Richard E. Neustadt. Tapings were funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, New York, N.Y., from whom the material is available).
4. Ibid. All of the participants in the tape made in June 1983 -- Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, George Ball and U. Alexis Johnson -- recalled vividly the force of Robert Kennedy's way of putting this point: that his brother, the President, was not about to become "the Tojo of the 1960s."
5. McGeorge Bundy has pointed out to me that by the final weekend of the missile crisis, a surprise attack would have been out of the question. Fair warning had been given, in his view, that if the missiles were not removed, the United States would remove them. One suspects, however, that this technicality would not, in the minds of at least some EXCOMM members, have proved satisfactory justification for the bombing of Cuba. Bundy himself believes that if the terms of the American offer of October 27 had not been agreed to by the Soviets, President Kennedy would still have searched for a way to avoid an air strike on Cuba, one in which many innocent Cubans, forewarned or not, would no doubt have died. It seems clear enough that neither the President nor his

inner circle of advisors was keen on the air strike, and part of this had to do with the thought of killing innocent people, a la the Japanese at Pearl Harbor.

Insert p. 261(a)  
here

7. See Richard K. Betts, Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution), 1982; and "Surprise Attack and Preemption," in G.T. Allison, A. Carnesale and J.S. Nye, eds., Hawks, Doves and Owls: An Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War (New York: Norton, 1985), pp. 54-79; see also Robert Jervis, ✓ "Representativeness in Foreign Policy Judgements," Political Psychology, Vol. 7, No. 3 (September 1986), pp. 483-505; and Alexander L. George, "Crisis Management: The Interaction of Political and Military Considerations," ✓ Survival, Vol. 26, No. 5 (September/October, 1984), pp. 223-234. ✓ A
8. John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba," in Public Papers of the Presidents, 1962 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), pp. 806-809, p. 808.
9. Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership From FDR to Carter (New York: Wiley, 1980), p. 160. We ought also to recall the general paranoia, bordering on hysteria, regarding Castro's Cuba in those days, especially in the Congress. President Kennedy himself believed that his failure to apply force to remove ✓



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6. Robert S. McNamara, "Videotaped discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis", June, 1983.

the missiles would have resulted in a call for his impeachment. No one can say whether he was correct in this judgement. But even Sen. J. William Fulbright, who was later to cultivate a reputation as a dove during the Vietnam War, called for an airstrike on the Cuban missile bases.

10. Tad Szulc, Fidel: A Critical Portrait (New York: Morrow, 1986), pp. 583-585. The more we learn about Castro's attempts to, in effect, provoke a war over the missiles in Cuba in order to prevent any "deal" which might require their removal, the more we come to realize the breadth and depth of Khrushchev's fears of nuclear inadvertence. Khrushchev wanted to keep the missiles in Cuba, but he also wanted to avoid a nuclear war. Castro, it appears, just wanted to keep the missiles, and was willing to provoke a war to do so.
11. Scott D. Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management" International Security, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring, 1985), pp. 99-139.
12. Robert S. McNamara, cited in David Detzer, The Brink (New York: Crowell, 1979), p. 249.
13. This information derives from an interview with a former member of President Kennedy's EXCOMM.
14. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 75.



15. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Robert Kennedy and His Times (New York: Ballantine, 1979), pp. 570-571 (Emphasis added). The citation of "Kennedy's grim odds" to which Schlesinger refers is in T.C. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 705.
16. Richard E. Neustadt, "Basic Issues in National Security Operations," in Henry M. Jackson, ed., The Secretary of State and the Ambassador: Jackson Subcommittee Papers on the Conduct of American Foreign Policy (New York: Praeger, 1963), pp. 91-109, p. 95 (Emphasis added). See also Neustadt, Presidential Power, pp. 158-159.
17. Bob Dylan, "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall," Columbia Records, 1963.
18. Albert Wohlstetter and Roberta Wohlstetter, "Controlling the Risks in Cuba, " Adelphi Paper No. 7, April 1965. Reprinted in R.J. Art and K.N. Waltz, eds., The Use of Force: International Politics and Foreign Policy, 2nd ed. (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1983, pp. 307-343.
19. Ibid., p. 328.
20. John F. Kennedy, "Message in Reply to a Broadcast by Chairman Khrushchev on the Cuban Crisis," October 28, 1962. In Public Papers of the Presidents, 1962, pp. 814-815, p. 814.
21. A. Wohlstetter and R. Wohlstetter, "Controlling the Risks in Cuba," p. 329.

22. Ibid., p. 330.
23. Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making and System Structure in International Crises (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. 114-115.
24. Steven Brams, Superpower Games (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
25. See for example, the following standard texts in this field: Richard Ned Lebow, Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crises (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Stein, Psychology and Deterrence (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Daniel Frei, Risks of Unintentional Nuclear War (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allenheld, 1983); and Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).
26. This is the central theme Richard Ned Lebow's recent and provocative Nuclear Crisis Management: A Dangerous Illusion (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1987).
27. William James, "The Compounding of Consciousness." In J.J. McDermott, ed., The Writings of William James: A Comprehensive Edition Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 546-561, p. 560. (1909)



28. Graham T. Allison, Albert Carnesale and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., eds., Hawks, Doves and Owls: An Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War (New York: Norton, 1985). Even so, their emphasis on inadvertence and "owlish" measures meant to prevent it are still characterized as problems of preserving rationality in crises. These authors emphasize inadvertence as such, rather than the fear of it. The latter is a psychological issue and it is the focal point of my own analysis.
29. Albert Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists on the Bombing of Innocents," Commentary, Vol. 75, No. 6 (June 1983), pp. 15-35, p. 29.
30. People as diverse in their outlooks on nuclear policy as Congressman Les Aspin (via non-nuclear strategic warfare), Henry Kissinger (via strategic defense) and Jonathan Schell (via moral persuasion) have lately come out for finding a way to move "beyond nuclear deterrence."
31. William James, "Bergson and His Critique of Intellectualism," in J.J. McDermott, ed., Writings of William James, pp. 561-581, p. 573. (1909) ✓ B

Chapter IV: Rational/Irrational Actor Psychologies: The Puzzle and Probability of Inadvertent Nuclear War.

1. Ronald Reagan, "Radio Address to the Nation," April 17, 1982.

2. Thomas C. Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 259.
3. I have benefited greatly from discussions of "nuclear learning" with Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and from having had the opportunity to read his work in progress on this subject.
4. Thomas C. Schelling, "What Went Wrong With Arms Control?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Winter, 1985/86), pp. 219-233, p. 233.
5. Thomas C. Schelling, "Arrangements for Reciprocal Reassurance," in H. Roderick and U. Magnusson, eds. Avoiding Inadvertent War: Crisis Management (Austin, Texas: LBJ School of Public Affairs, 1983), pp. 123-129, p. 124. ✓ 4
6. Works which are now often regarded as classics from a bygone "golden age" of nuclear strategy are: Albert Wohlstetter, "The Delicate Balance of Terror," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 37, No. 2 (January, 1959); Bernard Brodie, Strategy in the Missile Age (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1959); and Thomas C. Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).
7. This is the title of chapter one in Schelling's Strategy of Conflict.
8. Schelling, "What Went Wrong With Arms Control?"
9. Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Boston: Little-Brown, 1971); John D. Steinbruner, The Cybernetic Theory of Decision (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1974).

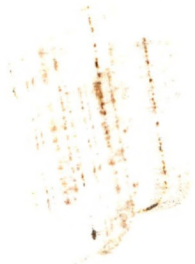


10. John D. Steinbruner, "Beyond Rational Deterrence: The Struggle for New Conceptions," in Klaus Knorr, ed., Power, Strategy, and Security (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983), pp. 103-125, p. 119. (1976)
11. An excellent critical review of the burgeoning literature of psychological radicalism on nuclear issues may be found in Stanley Hoffmann, "On the Political Psychology of War and Peace: A Critique and an Agenda," Political Psychology, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March, 1986), pp. 1-22. See also my own articles on psychological radicalism listed in Footnote 3 to Chapter II (above).
12. Murray Sayle, "KE 007: A Conspiracy of Circumstance," New York Review of Books, Vol. 32, No. 7, April 25, 1985, pp. 44-54.
13. The standard reference for this point of view is Charles Perrow, Normal Accidents (New York: Basic Books, 1984). For an application of this viewpoint to nuclear war, see Todd Gitlin, "Time to Move Beyond Deterrence" The Nation (December 22, 1984), pp. 676-679. For a critique of the notion that assessing the probability of nuclear war is like spinning a roulette wheel, see my "Beyond Deterrence or Beyond Utopian Ideology?: Thought Experiments for an Anti-Nuclear Movement in Crisis", Working Paper No. 2 (Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University), and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Nuclear Ethics (New York: Free Press, 1986), Chapter 5.

14. Helen Caldicott, Missile Envy (New York: Morrow, 1984).  
See also Joel Kovel, Against the State of Nuclear Terror (Boston: South End Press, 1983).
15. Morton Deutsch, "The Prevention of World War III: A Psychological Perspective," Political Psychology, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1983), pp. 3-31. The pioneer among psychologists in articulating this point of view was Charles E. Osgood. See his An Alternative to War or Surrender (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1962). See also Ralph K. White, Fearful Warriors: A Psychological Profile of U.S.-Soviet Relations (New York: Free Press, 1984), and John E. Mack, "Toward a Collective Psychopathology of the Nuclear Arms Competition," Political Psychology, Vol. 6, No. 2 (1985), pp. 291-321. ✓ A
16. Erik H. Erikson, "Reflections on Ethos and War," Yale Review (1984), pp. 481-486; Erikson's remarks about the connection he sees between the pseudo-speciation of the Jews in Nazi Germany and in U.S.-Soviet relations occurred at a conference on "The Psychology of U.S.-Soviet Relations," March, 1986, in Big Sur, California. ✓ A
17. See Irving Janis, Groupthink, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1982), and Lebow, Between Peace and War.
18. See Robert Jervis, et al., Psychology and Deterrence. See also, for a critique of the psychological approach to nuclear policy in that book, my "The New Psychology of War and Peace," International Security, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Winter, 1986/87), pp. 175-186. ✓ A



19. See G.T. Allison, et. al., Hawks, Doves, and Owls, and Graham T. Allison, Albert Carnesale and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "The Owl's Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War," The Washington Quarterly, Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer, 1986), pp. 45-58. (V)
20. This (essentially psychological) characterization of "crisis" is taken from Lebow, Between Peace and War, pp. 10-12.
21. R.K. Betts, "Surprise Attack and Preemption," p. 59.
22. J.D. Steinbruner, "Beyond Rational Deterrence," p. 104.
23. See J.G. Blight, "Beyond Deterrence or Beyond Utopian Ideology?" and J.S. Nye, Nuclear Ethics, Chapter 5. (✓)
24. R. Jervis, et al., Psychology and Deterrence, Chapters 3-5.
25. R.N. Lebow, in R. Jervis, et al., Psychology and Deterrence, p. 192.
26. William James, The Principles of Psychology, 2 Vols. (New York: Henry Holt, 1890), Vol. 1, p. 196.
27. G.T. Allison, et al., Hawks, Doves, and Owls, pp. 214-216.
28. Regular contact has for some time been established between various members of the Harvard Group and both the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the House Armed Services Committee. A good deal of the discussion has so far been given over to how various "owlish" measures might eventually be implemented.





Chapter V: Phenomenological Psychology: The Look and Feel of Inadvertent Nuclear Danger.

1. "Model I" and "Model II" factors derive from Graham T. Allison's original exposition of these constructs in Essence of Decision, Chapters 1 and 3. Their application to contemporary questions of nuclear policy are in G. T. Allison, et al, eds, Hawks, Doves, and Owls, Chapter 8, and G.T. Allison, et al., "Owl's Agenda." Nuclear strategists Thomas Schelling and Charles Glaser have in conversation expressed to me considerable skepticism about the explanatory usefulness of "Model II" factors, while psychiatrist John Mack and political scientist Richard Ned Lebow have, also in conversations with me, been just as skeptical about the usefulness (and reality) of "Model I" factors.
2. T.C. Schelling, "Arrangements for Reciprocal Reassurance," pp. 123-24. ✓
3. John F. Kennedy, cited in R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 40.
4. Robert S. McNamara, Videotaped Discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis, conducted by Richard E. Neustadt, June, 1983. (Tapes and transcripts in the possession of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, New York, New York).

5. Ibid.
6. William James, "The Stream of Thought," in Principles of Psychology, Vol. 1, pp. 224-290. See also Gerald Myers, William James: His Life and Thought (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); and Jacques Barzun, A Stroll With William James (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Myers gives a very thorough philosophical and psychological exposition of James ideas on "the stream of thought", though Myers' style is a bit hard to penetrate -- he is the very opposite of James in this respect. Barzun, while not as thorough as Myers, offers the skeptical or uninitiated reader many reasons for believing that James is as pertinent as ever -- and as lively.
7. I have borrowed these terms from Richard Wollheim, The Thread of Life (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), pp. 33-42. The distinction between direct and mediated knowledge is an old one, however, and very fundamental in epistemology. See, for example, William James's distinction between "knowledge of acquaintance" and "knowledge about" (Principles of Psychology, Vol. 1, pp. 221-223); and Thomas Nagel's recent illuminating evocation of the difference between what he calls the (objective) "view from nowhere" and the personal and unique "view from somewhere" (The View From Nowhere, New



York: Oxford University Press, 1986). And for a particularly striking discussion of some of these issues, see Nagel's "What is it like to be a Bat?" in Mortal Questions (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 165-180.

8. Robert Jervis, The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 58.
9. Thomas C. Schelling, "Confidence in Crisis," International Security, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Spring 1984), pp. 55-66, p. 57. VA  
Law?
10. Richard E. Neustadt, Videotaped Discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis, June, 1983. ✓
11. Maxwell Taylor, Videotaped Discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis with Ricahrd E. Neustadt, June, 1983. (Videotape in the possession of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, New York, N.Y.). ✓
12. Edmund Husserl, Ideas, translated by W.R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier, 1962).
13. Charles Taylor, "The Explanation of Purposive Behavior," in R. Borger and F. Cioffi, Explanation in the Behavioral Sciences (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 49-79, p. 49.
14. Theodore Mischel, "Psychological Explanations and Their Vicissitudes," in W.J. Arnold, ed., Conceptual Foundations of Psychology (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), pp. 134-204, p. 146.

15. William James, Principles of Psychology, Vol. 1, p. 225.
16. Ibid., p. 192.

Chapter VI: The Evolution of Feared Nuclear Inadvertence: A Framework for Understanding the Psychology of Avoiding Nuclear War.

1. Plato, Meno (Jowett translation) in R.M. Hutchins, ed., The Great Books of the Western World (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), Vol. 7, pp. 174-190, p. 179.
2. Ibid., p. 179.
3. I am reasonably certain that Einstein did say this, or something very near to it, late in his life. But I am also certain that I cannot find the precise reference. I trust I do the great man no posthumous disservice by citing him from memory, rather than from the written record.
4. One of the most recent and important examples of the use of the analogy between non-nuclear and nuclear crises is Jervis, et al., Psychology and Deterrence. But complementary accounts may also be found in Robert Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation (New York: Basic Books, 1984), whose framework is the "prisoner's dilemma" game, and Irving Janis, Groupthink, whose theoretical basis is psychological research on stress and decision-making.



5. Iris Murdoch, The Bell. Cited in J.W.N. Watkins, "Imperfect Rationality," in R. Borger and F. Cioffi, Explanation in the Behavioral Sciences, pp. 167-230, p. 229.
6. This information came to light in conversations about the missile crisis between Robert McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, and myself.
7. Alexander L. George, "Crisis Management: The Interaction of Political and Military Considerations," Survival, Vol. 26, No. 5 (September/October 1984), pp. 223-234, p. 224.
8. Dean Rusk, Statement opening discussion at Meeting No. 1 of "EXCOMM," October 16, 1962. In Marc Trachtenberg, ed., "White House Tapes and Minutes of the Cuban Missile Crisis," International Security, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Summer 1985), pp. 164-203, pp. 171-173.
9. Theodore C. Sorensen, "Memo to EXCOMM members," October 17, 1962. (Box 49, National Security Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA), p. 1.
10. R.E. Neustadt, "Basic Issues in National Security Operations," p. 95; and Presidential Power, p. 158.
11. T.C. Sorensen, "Memo to EXCOMM Members," p. 3.
12. Barbara Tuchman, The Guns of August (New York: Bantam, 1976), pp. 91-92. (1962).

13. See, for example, Paul Bracken, The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 2-3; and Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," in S.E. Miller, ed., Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 58-107.
14. Albert Carnesale, Paul Doty, Stanley Hoffmann, Samuel P. Huntington, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., and Scott D. Sagan, Living With Nuclear Weapons (New York: Bantam, 1983), p. 44.
15. Paul Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 7.
16. The source of this passage prefers to remain anonymous. (✓)
17. Frank A. Sieverts, "Report" (on the Cuban Missile Crisis), writtin during the summer of 1963 for the State Department. (Box 49, National Security Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA).
18. Ibid.
19. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 105.
20. J.F. Kennedy, "Report . . . on the Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba," p. 807.
21. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 105.
22. Figure 2 is adapted from a figure in Hannes Adomeit, Soviet Risk-Taking and Crisis Behavior (London: Allen and Unwin, 1982), p. 43.



23. Neustadt, Presidential Power, p. 158.
24. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, pp. 47-48.
25. Richard E. Neustadt and G.T. Allison, "Afterword" to R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, pp. 107-150, p. 118.
26. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Cycles of American History (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1986), p. 62. (Reprinted from an article in Foreign Affairs, 1983, "Foreign Policy and the American Character." Walter Cronkite, in a CBS News Special Report of October 24, 1962, used the same analogy. As he and his colleagues were assessing the situation the evening after the Quarantine went into effect, Cronkite remarked that if one of the Soviet ships tried to run through the quarantine line, and if fighting broke out, and if escalation ensued, then, according to Cronkite, "there goes the whole ball game." ("CBS News Special Report" October 24, 1962, Property of CBS News Archives, New York, N.Y.).
27. Robert Jervis, The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 53.
28. McGeorge Bundy, "To Cap the Volcano," Foreign Affairs (October 1969), p. 2.
29. McGeorge Bundy, "Political Leadership and Nuclear Deterrence: Some Claims for the Utility of Truth." (A lecture at the Davies Forum, University of San Francisco, October 25, 1983), p. 9.

30. See Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture" in C. Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.
31. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 84.
32. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Nuclear Ethics (New York: Free Press, 1986), p. 65; and Derek Parfit, Reasons and Persons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 453.
33. Clifford Geertz, Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology (New York: Basic Books, 1983), p. 47.
34. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 724.
35. Harry S. Truman, cited in Schlesinger, Cycles of American History, p. 398.
36. Eisenhower made this statement in an interview with Stephen E. Ambrose. See Ambrose, Eisenhower: The President (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 184.
37. Dean Rusk, in a videotaped discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis, January 1983. (A Project of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, New York, N.Y., which owns the tapes).
38. Richard Nixon may be an exception. In a recent interview Nixon told Roger Rosenblatt that he gave the use of nuclear weapons serious consideration on four occasions:  
(1) During the Vietnam War, (2) During the 1973 Middle



East war, (3) During the 1969 Soviet-Chinese border dispute, and (4) during the India-Pakistan War of 1971.

See Rosenblatt, Witness: The World Since Hiroshima

(Boston: Little, Brown, 1985), pp. 78-79. It is hard to know what to make of such claims. In subsequent interviews, however, Henry Kissinger gently suggested that when a President (in this case a former President) says he "considered" going to nuclear war, one must take it with a grain of salt. In fact, it seems doubtful whether Nixon ever "considered" the use of nuclear weapons any more seriously than did Eisenhower in 1954.

39. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 724.
40. Thomas C. Schelling, Arms and Influence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 166.
41. Ibid., pp. 121-122.
42. Ibid., p. 121.
43. Nikita Khrushchev, "Letter to President Kennedy," October 26, 1962. Reprinted in R.R. Pope, ed., Soviet Views on the Cuban Missile Crisis (Lanham, MD: UPA, 1982), pp. 37-49, p. 48.
44. John F. Kennedy, "Letter to Chairman Khrushchev," October 28, 1962. In Public Papers of the Presidents, 1962, pp. 814-815, p. 814.
45. David Rosenhan, "On Being Sane in Insane Places," Science, Vol. 179, pp. 250-258.
46. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 75.

47. Herbert Dinnerstein has suggested that the shoot-down of the American U2 over Cuba on October 27 may have been the result of efforts of Soviet hard-liners to foil any chances for a negotiated settlement of the crisis, one which would have presumably entailed removal of the missiles from Cuba. See Dinnerstein, The Making of a Missile Crisis, October 1962 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 229. Moreover, it was clear during the crisis, and it is even clearer in retrospect, that Castro bitterly opposed any settlement of the crisis that would require removing the missiles. See Tad Szulc, Fidel: A Critical Portrait (New York: Morrow, 1986), pp. 584-589. One hears rumors from time to time that Castro even ordered some of his forces to try to take over one of the Soviet SAM sites, presumably so they could shoot down more American U-2s, thus precipitating a war they preferred, <sup>NO</sup> relative to losing the Soviet missiles. \* These rumors persist, though I have not yet seen any hard documentation to back them up.
- without  
concessions  
(+ consult.)  
when?*

48. See Michael R. Beschloss, May-Day: Eisenhower, Khrushchev and the U-2 Affair (New York: Harper and Row, 1986).
49. See Alexander Dallin, Black Box: KAL007 and the Superpowers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), especially pp. 100-105, on the role of political perceptions in this affair.

\* Castro thought balance was  
such that US "had" to back  
off.



50. See Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (Boston: Little-Brown, 1971), p. 225. See also Thomas M. Coffey, Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of General Curtis LeMay (New York: Crown, 1986), pp. 391-393, for LeMay's recollections of some aspects of the missile crisis.
51. Dean Acheson, cited in Elie Abel, The Missile Crisis (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1966), p. 182.
- ✓ 52. Richard M. Nixon, "Cuba, Castro, and John F. Kennedy," Reader's Digest (November 1964).
53. John F. Kennedy, in M. Trachtenberg, ed., "White House Tapes," p. 181.
54. A. Schlesinger, Cycles of American History, p. 415.
55. Thomas Nagel, Mortal Questions (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 74. See also Stanley Hoffmann, Duties Beyond Borders: On the Limits and Possibilities of Ethical International Politics (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1981), p. 81.

VII American Ultimatum or Statement of Fact? The Role of Feared Nuclear Inadvertence in the Resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis

1. John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Soviet Arms Buildup in Cuba," October 22, 1962. In Public Papers of the President, 1962, p. 809.

2. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 716.
3. George W. Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs (New York: Norton, 1982), p. 286.
4. McGeorge Bundy, Videotaped "Discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis," January 1983 (Tapes are the property of the Sloan Foundation, New York, NY). ✓
5. T.S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages," cited in Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern, p. xiii.
6. Adam Yarmolinsky, "Department of Defense Operations During the Cuban Crisis" (A Report to the Secretary of Defense, February 13, 1963), ed. by Dan Caldwell in The Naval War College Review, Vol. 32, No. 4 (July-August 1979), pp. 83-99, p. 93.
7. Scott D. Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts and Crisis Management," International Security, Vol. 9, No. 4 (Spring 1985), pp. 99-139, p. 109.
8. Ibid., p. 109.
9. For example, a long "CBS News Special Report" on the missile crisis for October 26, 1962, was given over almost entirely to a virtually verbatim replay of the exchanges between Zorin and Stevenson at the U.N. (Tape located at CBS News Archives, New York, N.Y.). This was very misleading, it turned out. The resolution of the missile crisis seems to me to have had relatively little to do with public events at the UN, and everything to do with leaders' private fears of the results of their military preparations.

9a. A. Yarmolinsky, "Department of Defense Operations," p. 92.



10. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 75.
11. This anecdote derives from an oral history of Lieutenant Genral David A. Burchinal, cited in David Detzer, The Brink (New York: Crowell, 1979), p. 281, and in Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts," p. 118. ✓
12. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 713.
13. Nikita Khrushchev, "Letter to President Kennedy," October 28, 1962." R.R. Pope, ed., Soviet Views of the Cuban Missile Crisis, pp. 58-65, pp. 62-63.
14. Sagan, "Nuclear Alerts" p. 101.
15. Nikita Khrushchev, "Letter to President Kennedy," October 26, 1962. In R.R. Pope, ed., Soviet Views of the Cuban Missile Crisis, pp. 37-49, p. 49.
16. Sorensen, Kennedy, pp. 713-714 (italics added).
17. Ibid., p. 705.
18. See, for example, Richard K. Betts, "Surprise Attack and Preemption," in G.T. Allison, et al., Hawks, Doves and Owls, pp. 54-79, p. 66. The argument for President Kennedy's "irrationality" in setting the odds so high derives from Thomas C. Schelling, in a series of verbal and written communications to me. (1) ✓
19. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 716.
20. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 87.
21. Ibid., pp. 86-87.
22. McGeorge Bundy, "The Cuban Missile Crisis" (A Chapter in his forthcoming book on the history of nuclear diplomacy). (2) ✓

23. Garry Wills, The Kennedy Imprisonment: A Meditation on Power (New York: Pocket Books, 1983), p. 279. (1982).  
Other notable expressions of this so-called "revisionist" view may be found in Barton J. Bernstein, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?" Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 95, No. 1 (Spring 1980), pp. 97-126; James A. Nathan, "The Missile Crisis: His Finest Hour Now," World Politics, Vol. 27, No. 2 (January 1975), pp. 256-281; and Richard Ned Lebow, Between Peace and War. ✓ A
24. Bruce Miroff, Pragmatic Illusions: The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy (New York: David MacKay, 1975), pp. 88-89. ✓
25. Allison, Essence of Decision, p. 198.
26. Schelling, Arms and Influence, p. 166.
27. Gen. Maxwell Taylor, in a videotaped discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis (Tapes in possession of the Sloan Foundation, New York).
28. Schelling, Arms and Influence, pp. 121-122. ✓
29. Galway Kinnell, The Past (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1985), p. 48.
30. In the Freudian lexicon, this phenomenon is known as "The Compulsion to Repeat," or "The Repetition Compulsion." See Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle. In J. Strachey, ed., The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (London: Hogarth, 1966), Vol. VIII, pp. 3-64, pp. 14-17. (1920). ✓



31. Robert S. McNamara, "Videotaped discussion of the Cuban Missile Crisis, June, 1983 (Tapes are the property of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, New York, N.Y.).
32. Robert S. McNamara, "Hearings on Military Posture Before the House Committee on Armed Services, for Fiscal Year 1964." (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), p. 274.
33. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Robert Kennedy and His Times (New York: Ballantine, 1978), pp. 570-571.
34. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House (New York: Fawcett, 1965), pp. 760-761.
35. Khrushchev, Letter to Kennedy of October 26, pp. 43-44; 48.
36. Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, translated and edited by Strobe Talbot (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970), pp. 500, 504.
37. Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 714.
38. Ibid., p. 716.
39. Ibid., p. 717.
40. See above, this chapter, footnote 23, for several references to this "revisionist" literature.
41. Ulric Neisser, Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts (San Francisco: Freeman, 1982), p. 47. On the constructive nature of memory, also consult Neisser's previous Cognitive Psychology (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967).
42. McGeorge Bundy, "The Cuban Missile Crisis."

43. Thomas S. Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, rev. ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 84.
44. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 2.
45. Dean Rusk, cited in E. Abel, The Missile Crisis, p. 127.
46. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 47.
47. Thomas S. Kuhn, The Essential Tension: Selected Studies in Scientific Tradition and Change (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 263-264.
48. George Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern, pp. 304-305. ✓
49. Jurgen Habermas, Legitimation Crisis (Boston: Beacon Press, 1975), p. 1.
50. Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, p. 497.
51. On Ball, see E. Abel, The Missile Crisis, p. 127; on McNamara, consult the Sloan Foundation videotaped discussion of the missile crisis, June, 1983. ✓
52. Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers, pp. 497-498.
53. Jurgen Habermas, Legitimation Crisis, p. 2.
54. The locus classicus is William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience (New York: Collier, 1961). (1902).  
More recently, this theme -- the centrality of radical change in the development of human personality -- has become the domain of Erik Erikson and his many followers. See especially Erikson's Young Man Luther (New York: Norton, 1958).
55. Soren Kierkegaard, The Concept of Dread (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 140. (1844) ✓



56. Theodore Sorensen, Kennedy, p. 733.
57. John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address," in Public Papers of the Presidents, 1961, pp. 1-2.
58. John F. Kennedy, "Commencement Address at American University in Washington," in Public Papers of the Presidents, 1963, pp. 459-464, p. 462.
59. John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty," in Public Papers of the Presidents, 1963, pp. 601-606, p. 602.  
Portions of the preceding paragraphs are adapted from my article "Toward a Policy-Relevant Psychology of Avoiding Nuclear War: Lessons for Psychologists From the Cuban Missile Crisis, The American Psychologist (January 1987), pp. 1-18.
60. Erik Erikson, Young Man Luther, p. 254 (italics in original).

Chapter VIII. The Adaptive Role of Fear in a Nuclear Crisis

1. Horace Fletcher, "Happiness as Found in Forethought Minus Fearthought," cited in W. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 92-93 (italics in original).
2. Coral Bell, The Conventions of Crisis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 2. Bell gives no reference for McNamara's celebrated utterance, one which has become

something like Holy Writ for the budding discipline of nuclear crisis management. In fact, I have not been able to discover the source. Whether McNamara actually uttered the statement or not is less interesting, in my view, than the reliance of an entire generation of aspiring crisis managers on Bell's unreferenced attribution to McNamara.

*NO* { All of them, to a person, cite McNamara (as cited by Bell) indicating, among other things, just how deeply rooted is crisis management in a single individual's (McNamara's) alleged interpretation of a single event, the missile crisis.

3. See Alexander L. George, "Crisis Management: The Interaction of Political and Military Considerations," Survival, Vol. 26, No. 5 (September/October 1984), pp. 223-234; and "Political Crises," in J.S. Nye, ed., The Making of America's Soviet Policy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 129-158. See also Richard Ned Lebow, Between Peace and War; and Nuclear Crisis Management: A Dangerous Illusion (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987). ✓
4. Robert Jervis, Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, Psychology and Deterrence (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 4. ✓
5. Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), esp. pp. 62-78. ✓



*much of this, unconscious (denial...)*  
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6. "Ego psychology" is often portrayed as a distinctly post-Freudian development, a movement away from Freud's alleged too-heavy emphasis on the instinctual, unconscious basis of thinking and behavior. But its roots are clearly present in Freud's late work. See his The Ego and the Id, in J. Strachey, ed., Standard Edition of Freud, Vol. XIX, pp. 3-66. See also Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense (New York: International Universities Press, 1946). (1936).
7. Richard Ned Lebow, "Conclusions" to Psychology and Deterrence, pp. 203-232, pp. 213-214.
8. Thomas C. Schelling, The Strategy of Conflict (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 207.
9. Particularly influential examples of the comparative method are Schelling, Arms and Influence; Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, Force Without War: U.S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1978); Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Lebow, Between Peace and War; and Glenn H. Snyder and Paul Diesing, Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crisis (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977).

10. The psychological literature on the missile crisis is peculiar. By far the most famous such study is that of Irving Janis, Groupthink, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1982), pp. 132-158. Janis, who is a thoroughgoing devotee of the view that stress leads to bad decision-making, has nothing but praise for the managers of the missile crisis. Apparently, we are given to believe, they just overcame the stress, somehow. Janis's sometime collaborator Richard Ned Lebow, however, sees stress and "groupthink" even in the EXCOMM meetings Janis admires for the absence of "groupthink." See Lebow, Between Peace and War, pp. 298-303 and "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Reading the Lessons Correctly," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 98 (1983), pp. 431-458. To make his case, Lebow emphasizes the short schriff given by the EXCOMM to Adlai Stevenson's view that the U.S. ought to pursue a purely political/diplomatic course. The peculiarity of an argument like this is that it must assert the pernicious influence of "groupthink", et al. over a relatively minor issue -- whether or not to adopt Stevenson's plan -- while the outcome of the crisis, a sensible peaceful resolution, is left unaccounted for. By all reports, the stress was far greater during the second week, when the resolution occurred, than it was during the first week when, in Lebow's estimation, Stevenson was ignored. According to



the logic of the stress/decision-making psychopathology linkage, the decision-making flaws should therefore have come at the end of the crisis, rather than at the beginning. *Both*

11. Dean Acheson, "Dean Acheson's Version of Robert Kennedy's Version of the Cuban Missile Affair," Esquire, Vol. 71 (February 1969), pp. 44, 46, 76-77. ✓
12. Thomas C. Schelling, personal communication to the author, November 1984. (✓)
13. Richard Ned Lebow, "The Cuban Missile Crisis." ✓
14. Dean Rusk, in the Sloan Foundation Videotapes, January 1983.
15. Robert S. McNamara, in M. Trachtenberg, ed., "White House Tapes," p. 189 (*italics in original*). Warren I. Cohen also points out this propensity in Dean Rusk during the missile crisis; see his Dean Rusk (Totowa, NJ: Cooper Square Publishers, 1980), pp. 152-153.
16. John F. Kennedy and McGeorge Bundy, in M. Trachtenberg, ed., "White House Tapes," p. 181.
17. Robert F. Kennedy and Robert S. McNamara, in M. Trachtenberg, ed., "White House Tapes," p. 189.
18. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, p. 106.
19. This comes through with special clarity in the Sloan Foundation Videotape of June 1983 (with Robert McNamara, George Ball, McGeorge Bundy and V. Alexis Johnson). ✓


Especially poignant and revealing is McNamara's comparison of the excellent advice he received from Bohlen and Thompson during the missile crisis, and the awful advice on Indo-China he says he received during the escalation of the war in Indo-China.

20. See this chapter, footnote #1 (above).
21. Charles Taylor, "The Explanation of Purposive Behavior," in R. Borger and F. Cioffi, eds., Explanation in the Behavioral Sciences, pp. 49-95, p. 78.
22. Daniel Dennett, Brainstorms: Philosophical Essays on Mind and Psychology (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press) Bradford Books, 1978), pp. 3, 238.
23. The study of modern psychological theories of anxiety begins with Sigmund Freud, Inhibitions, Symptions and Anxiety, in J. Strachey, ed., Standard Edition of Freud, Vol. 20, pp. 77-175. (126). Addenda B ("Supplementary Remarks on Anxiety") is particularly relevant to a Freudian understanding of the kind of fear one might find in a nuclear crisis. ✓
24. William James, Varieties of Religious Experience, p. 219.



Chapter IX: The Psychology of Avoiding Nuclear War: What is at Stake?

1. On the June, 1983 Sloan Foundation Videotape, Robert McNamara says: "One can almost draw a law from this. Within certain limits, the longer the time taken to form the decision, the more sound the decision will be." To this, McGeorge Bundy replies: "now accepting Bob's law, that the more time the better, I think one has to add another law that has developed in the last 20 years, which is [that it is] likely there will be less time than there was the last time because things leak much faster in the government of the United States than they did 10 years ago, let along 20 years ago." I know of no one who disagrees with these "laws." The point, however, is that many observers (not the crisis participants, however, use them as levers with which to push aside the missile crisis and render it a poor model for attempting to understand any future nuclear crisis).
2. See Peter W. Rodman, "The Missiles of October: 20 Years Later" Commentary (October 1982), pp. 39-45; and Eliot A. Cohen, "Why We Should Stop Studying the Cuban Missile Crisis," The National Interest (Winter 1986), pp. 3-13.

3. See Bruce G. Blair, Strategic Command and Control: Redefining the Nuclear Threat (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985); Paul Bracken, The Command and Control of Nuclear Forces (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983); and Ashton B. Carter, John D. Steinbruner and Charles A. Zraket, eds., Managing Nuclear Operations (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1987). 
4. All the authors mentioned in the previous footnote tend toward this pessimistic conclusion. But perhaps the most picturesque formulation of this pessimism derives from Morton H. Halperin. The present situation, according to Halperin, resembles "a roulette wheel connected to a doomsday machine." See his The Nuclear Fallacy (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger, 1987).
5. Paul Bracken goes even further than this. He believes that if NATO ever goes on full alert, the Soviets will probably preempt NATO nuclear forces before its warheads can be brought to their launch vehicles (Command and Control of Nuclear Forces, p. 167).
6. Richard Ned Lebow, Nuclear Crisis Management, p. 147.
7. Ibid, p. 18.
8. Alexander L. George, "Crisis Management," p. 224.
9. See especially A. George and R. Smoke, Deterrence in American Foreign Policy.



10. Ole R. Holsti and Alexander L. George, "The Effects of Stress on the Performance of Foreign Policy-Makers," in C.P. Cotter, ed., Political Science Annual (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975), pp. 254-319; Alexander L. George, Presidential Decisionmaking in Foreign Policy (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1980); and "The Impact of Crisis-induced Stress on Decisionmaking" (a paper delivered at the Institute of Medicine Symposium on the Medical Aspects of Nuclear War, National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C., September 1985). One cannot fail to notice in all his work on stress and decision-making an even-handedness in George's work, a hesitancy about condemning policy-makers, that is often lacking in this literature.
11. See especially George's "Crisis Management," p. 230.
12. See Ibid., p. 230 and "Crisis Management: Requirements and Problems," in H. Roderick and V. Magnusson, eds., Avoiding Inadvertent War: Crisis Management (Austin, Texas: LBJ School, 1983), pp. 16-32; see especially p. 27.
13. Alexander L. George, "Crisis Management," p. 230.
14. Ibid., p. 230.
15. R.F. Kennedy, Thirteen Days, pp. 47-48.
16. Nikita Khrushchev, Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament, translated and edited by Strobe Talbot (Boston: Little Brown, 1974), p. 514.

17. Graham T. Allison, Albert Carnesale and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Hawks, Doves and Owls; and "The Owl's Agenda For Avoiding Nuclear War."
18. Joseph S. Nye, Jr., "Nuclear Learning and U.S.-Soviet Security Regimes" (a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., August 1986). ✓
19. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1983), pp. 41-43.
20. See Jonathan Schell, The Abolition (New York: Knopf 1984); and Carl Sagan, "Nuclear War and Climatic Catastrophe: Some Policy Implications," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 62, No. 2 (Winter 1983-1984), pp. 257-292.
21. See the text of President Reagan's speech of March 23, 1983, in which he outlined his dream of a perfect defense against ballistic missiles, New York Times, March 24, 1983, p. 20; and Robert Jastrow, How to Make Nuclear Weapons Obsolete (Boston: Little, Brown, 1985).
22. See Albert Wohlstetter, "Bishops, Statesmen, and Other Strategists on the Bombing of Innocents," Commentary, Vol. 75, No. 6 (June 1983), pp. 15-35; and "Between an Unfree World and None," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 63, No. 5 (Summer 1985), pp. 962-994. ✓



23. McGeorge Bundy, George F. Kennan, Robert S. McNamara and Gerard Smith, "Nuclear Weapons and the Atlantic Alliance," Foreign Affairs (Spring 1982), pp. 753-768; and Morton H. Halperin, The Nuclear Fallacy.
24. I am not claiming, obviously, that all nuclear policy analysts and policy-makers who worry about the degrading effects of fear of attack actually support these four policy initiatives. They do not. In this instance, I make a logical claim, rather than an empirical one: If fear of attack in a crisis were the only determinant of nuclear policy (which it is not; many factors enter into policy decisions), then these four programs ought logically to be supported, because they may help to reduce these fears. In fact, I believe a good deal of the support which exists for these programs derives from the belief that, in a crisis and with the policies in place, less fear of attack will be generated than would otherwise be the case. In the usage of Michael MccGwire, these policies are believed by their proponents to generate reassurance even as they retain adequate deterrence ("The Dilemmas and Delusions of Deterrence," in G. Prins, ed., The Nuclear Crisis Reader (New York: Vintage 1984, pp. 75-97). That is the argument and the basis for their appeal, in any case.

25. Stanley Hoffmann, "An Icelandic Saga," New York Review of Books, Vol. 33, No. 18 (November 20, 1986), pp. 15-17, p. 17.
26. Jonathan Schell, The Fate of the Earth (New York: Avon, 1982), pp. 183-184.
27. Stanley Hoffmann, "On the Political Psychology of War and Peace: A Critique and an Agenda," Political Psychology, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 1986), pp. 1-22. See also my piece "Toward a Policy-Relevant Psychology of Avoiding Nuclear War."
28. McGeorge Bundy, "The Bishops and the Bomb," New York Review of Books, Vol. 30, No. 10 (June 16, 1983), pp. 3-8; and "Existential Deterrence and its Consequences," in D. MacLean, ed., The Security Gamble: Deterrence Dilemmas in the Nuclear Age (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1984); pp. 3-13.
29. McGeorge Bundy, "Existential Deterrence and its Consequences," p. 9.
30. The basic texts are Schelling's The Strategy of Conflict; and Schelling and Morton H. Halperin, Strategy and Arms Control (New York: The Twentieth Century Fund, 1961). See also Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision, Chapter 1 ("The Rational Actor") for a concise summary of Schelling's assumptions and angle of approach to strategic questions.



31. Thomas C. Schelling, Strategy of Conflict, p. 208.
32. Ibid., pp. 218-219.
33. See Robert Jervis, "Perception and Misperception," pp. 62-77; Irving Janis, "Groupthink," pp. 250-254; and Richard Ned Lebow, Nuclear Crisis Management, pp. 139-153.
34. Thomas C. Schelling, "Confidence in Crisis," International Security, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Spring 1984), pp. 55-66, p. 57.
35. Schelling argues elegantly for the nuclear status quo in "What Went Wrong With Arms Control?" Foreign Affairs, Vol. 64, No. 2 (Winter 1985/86), pp. 219-233.
36. Ibid., p. 233. Schelling is here citing himself, from Arms and Influence, p. 259.
37. Thomas C. Schelling, "What Went Wrong With Arms Control?", p. 233.
38. Thomas C. Schelling, "Confidence in Crisis," p. 66.
39. George W. Ball, The Past Has Another Pattern, p. xiii.
40. Robert McNamara's recent views on nuclear policy may be gleaned from his Blundering Into Disaster: Surviving the First Century of the Nuclear Age (New York: Pantheon, 1986).
41. See William James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, pp. 138-139; and Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety, Rev. ed. (New York: Norton, 1977).
42. McGeorge Bundy, "Existential Deterrence and Its Consequence," p. 9.
43. McGeorge Bundy, "To Cap the Volcano," p. 2.

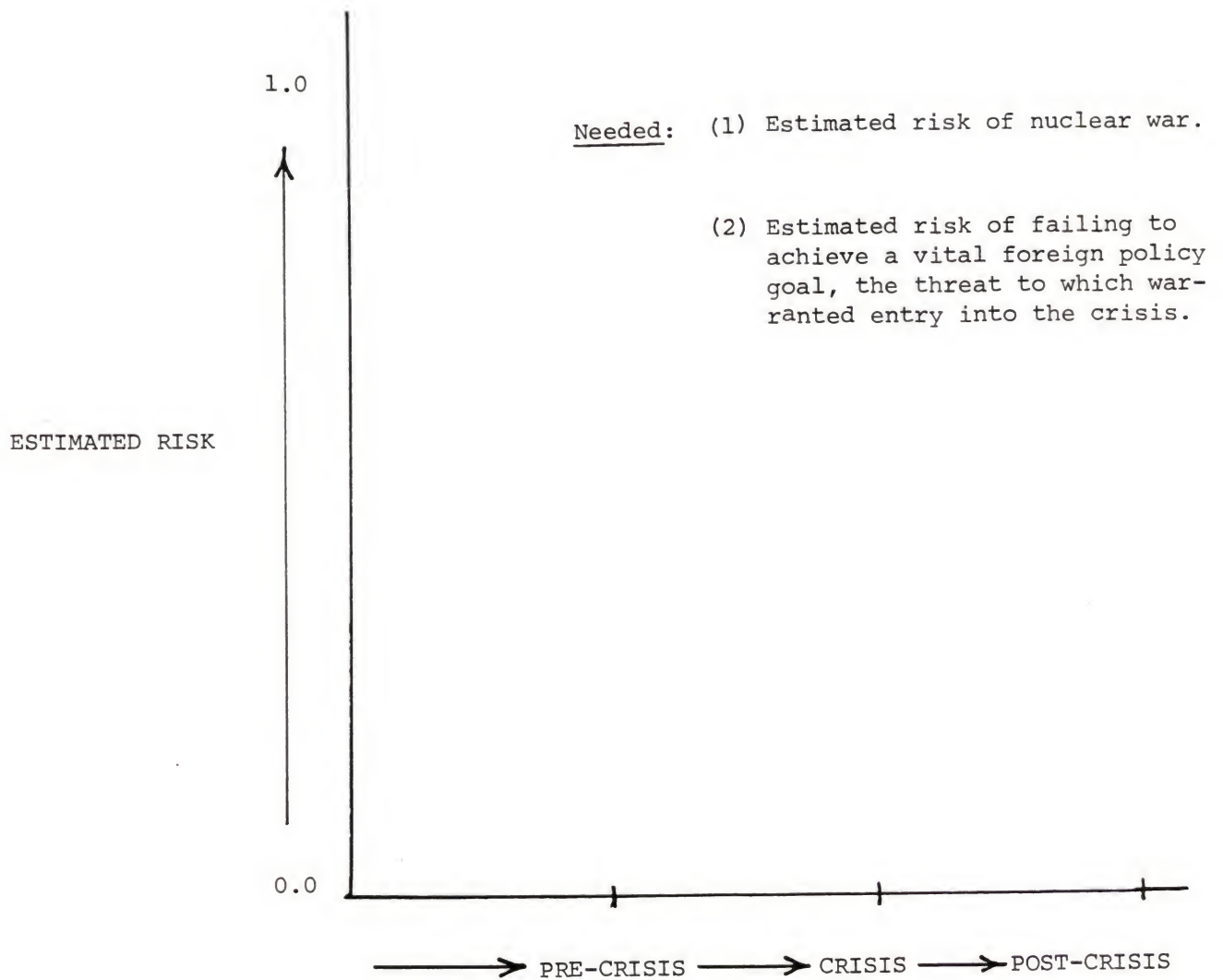


Figure 1. The basic dilemma of nuclear crisis management.



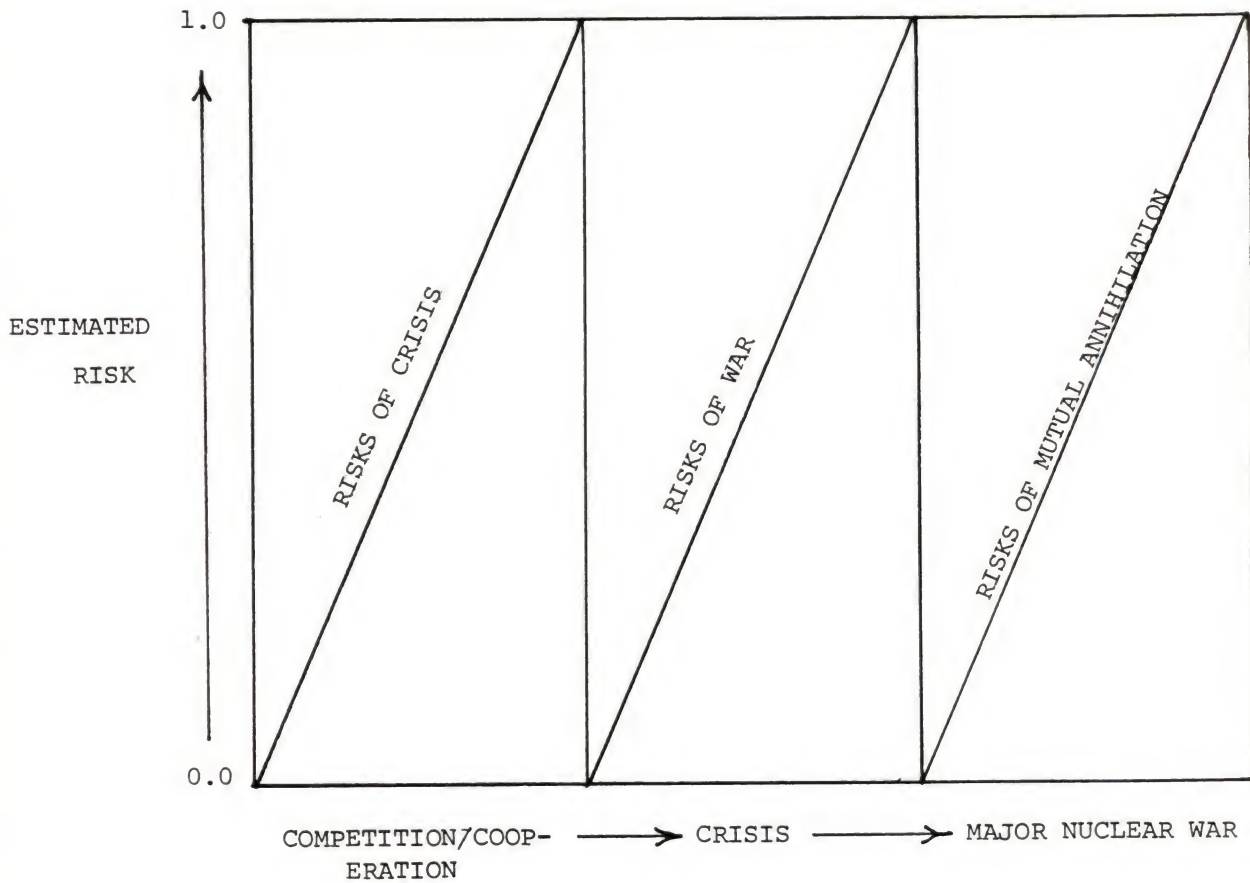


Figure 2. Stages in the evolution of the crystal ball effect.

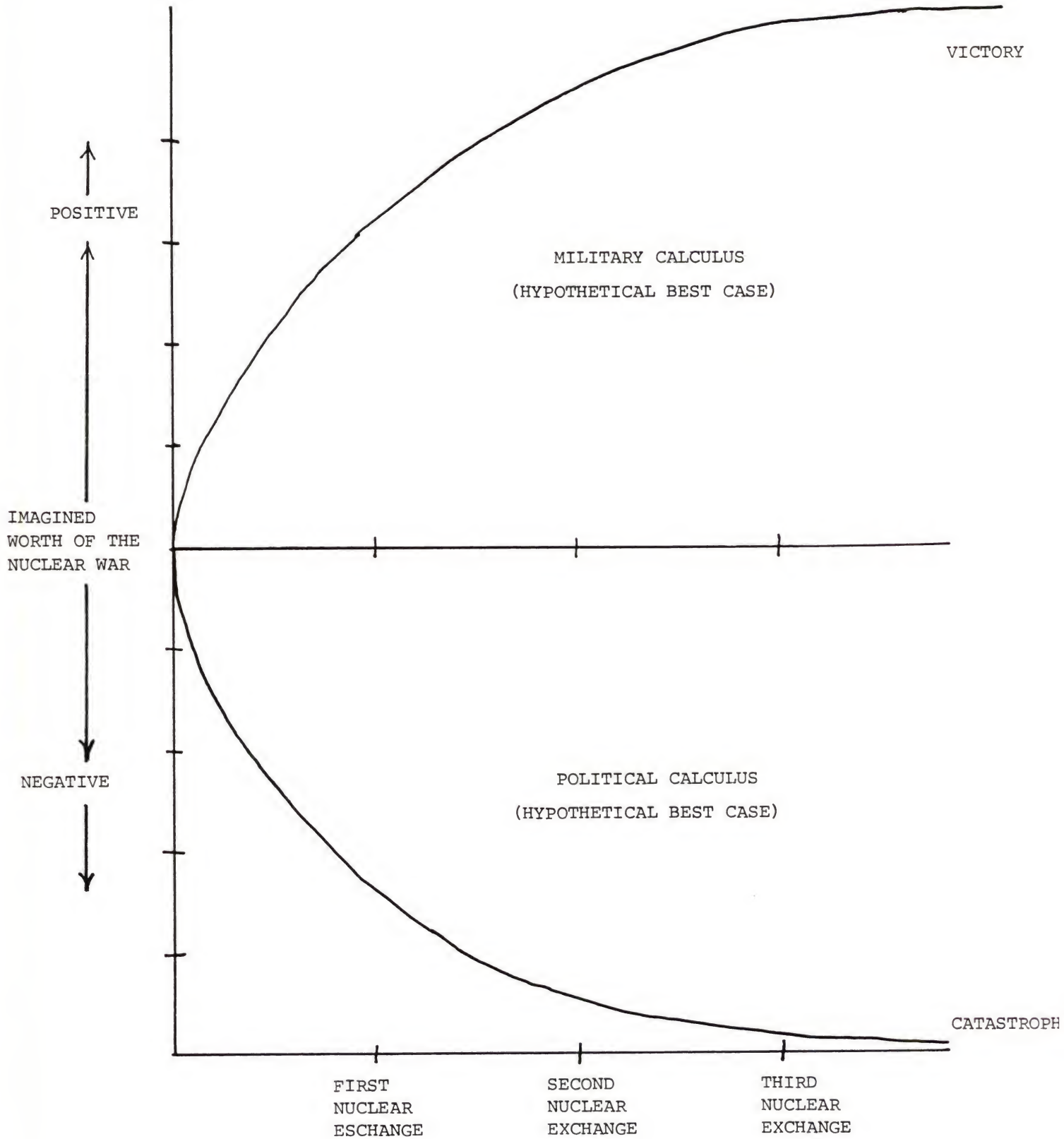


Figure 3. Military and political calculi of an imagined, major nuclear war.



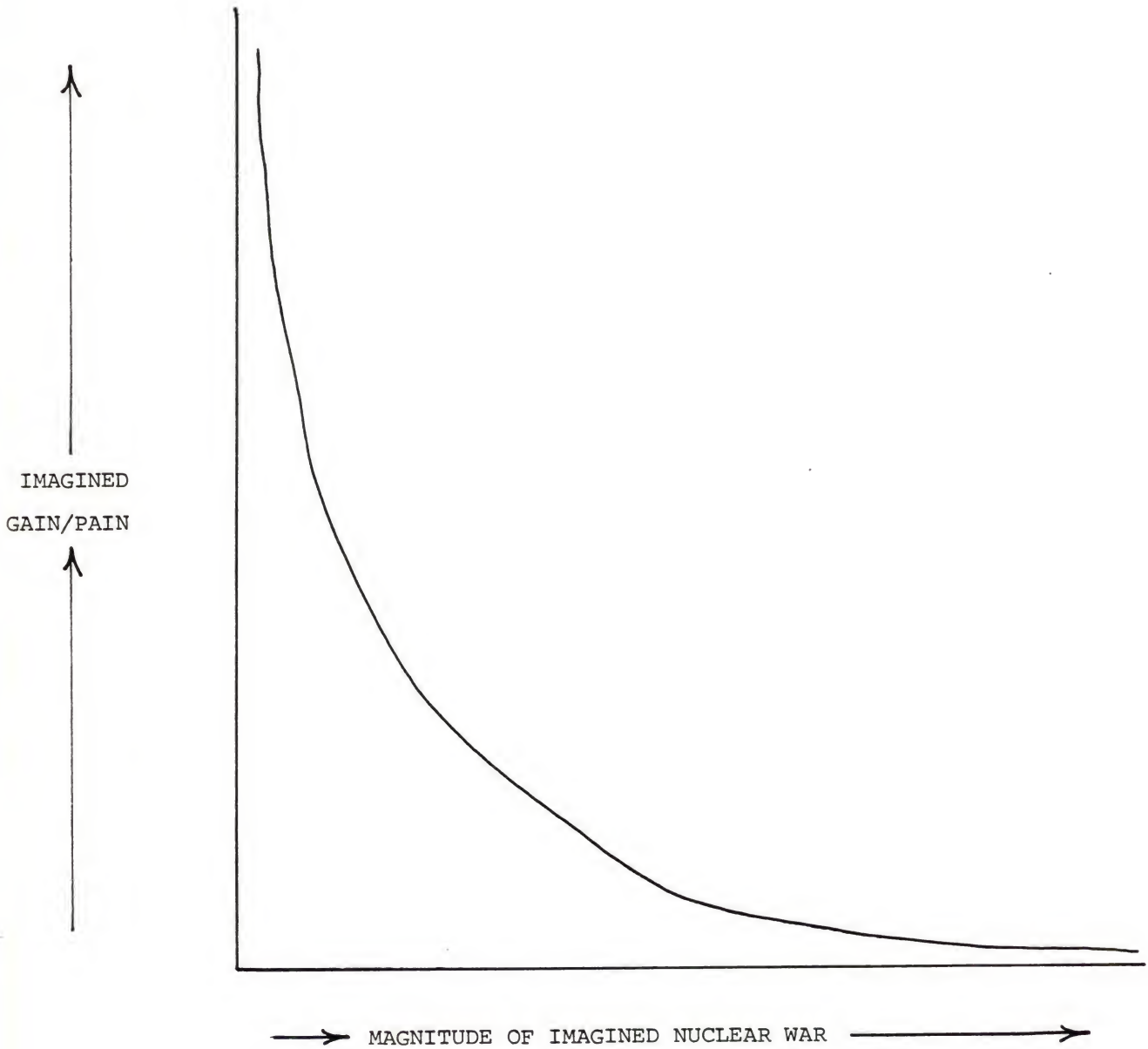


Figure 4. The inverse calculus of gain and pain imagined to be derived from a nuclear war.

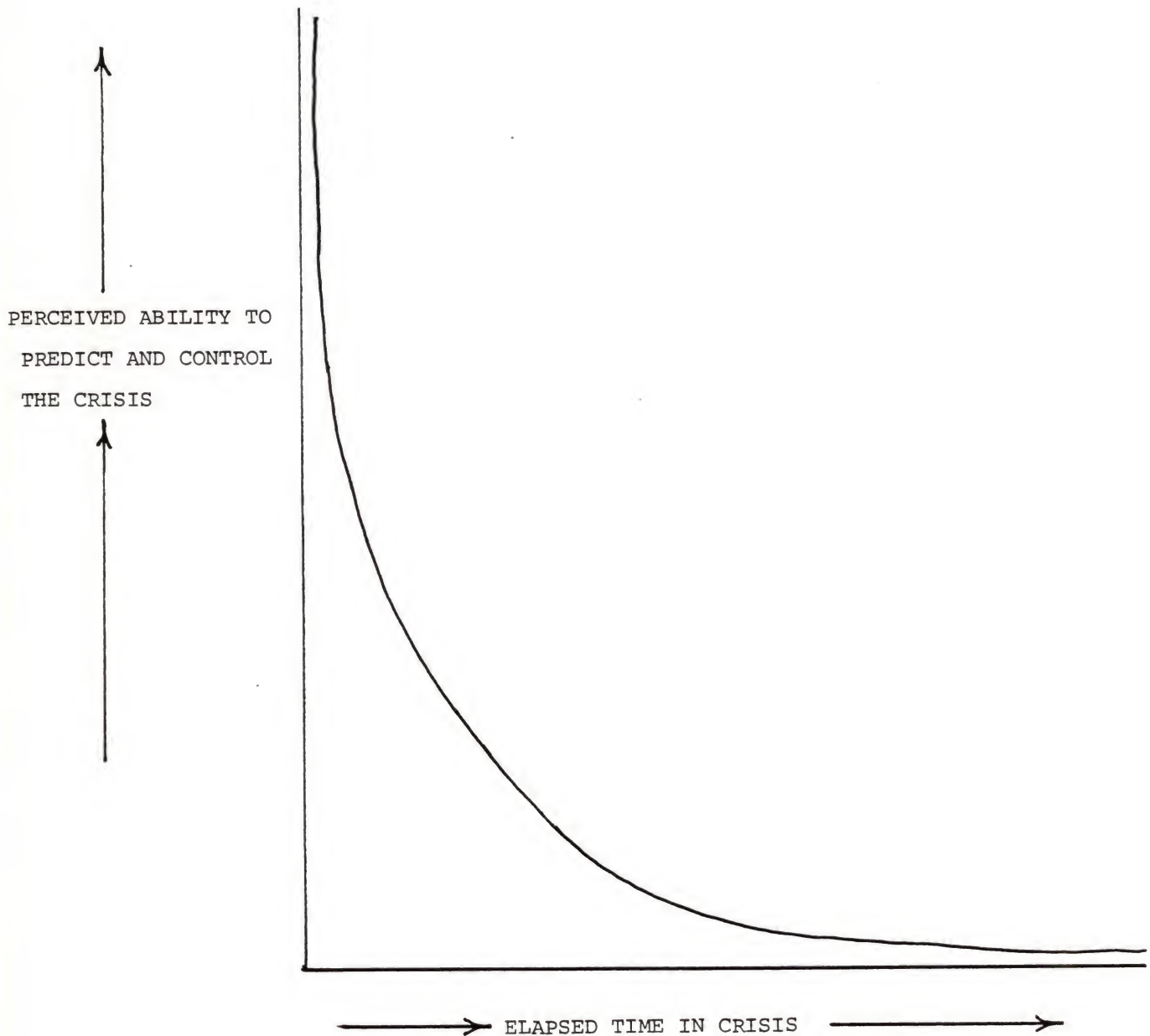


Figure 5. The evolution of situational perversity in a nuclear crisis.



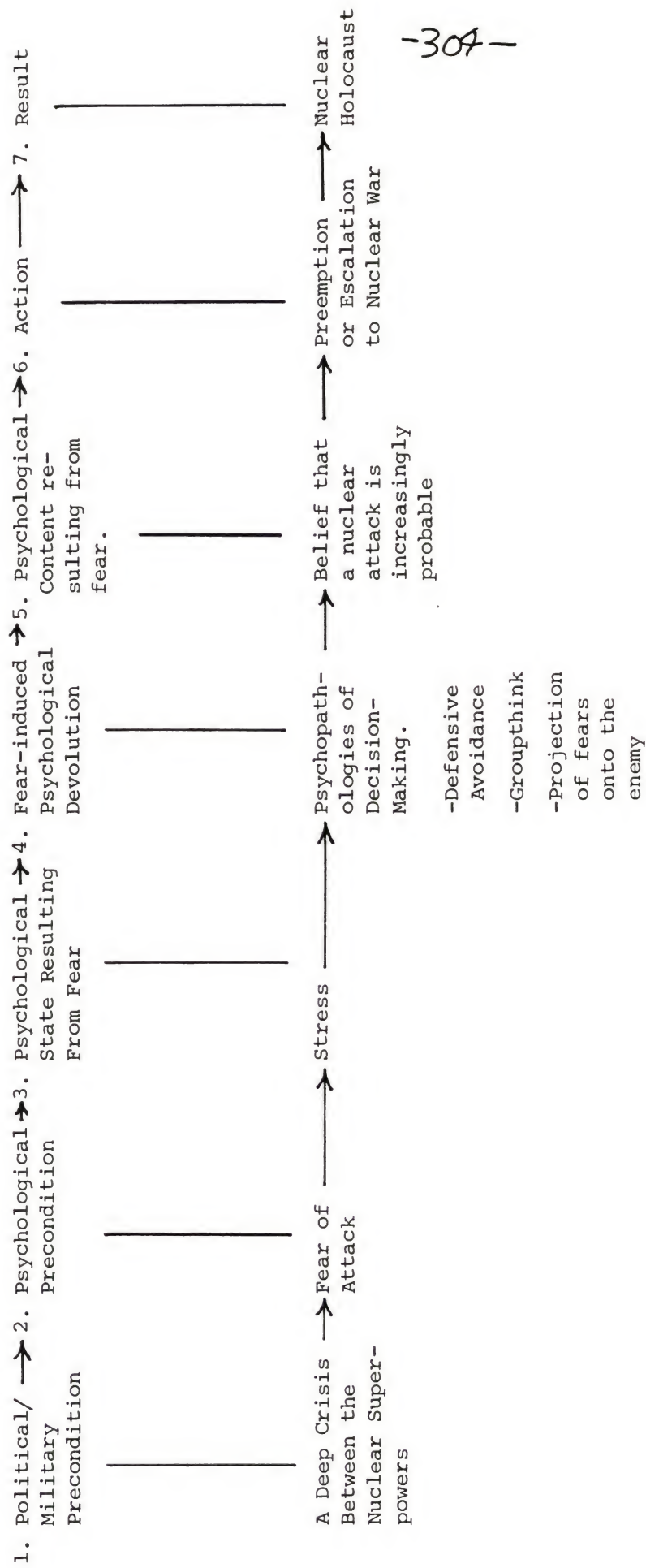


Figure 6. The maladaptive psychological path to holocaust in a nuclear crisis.

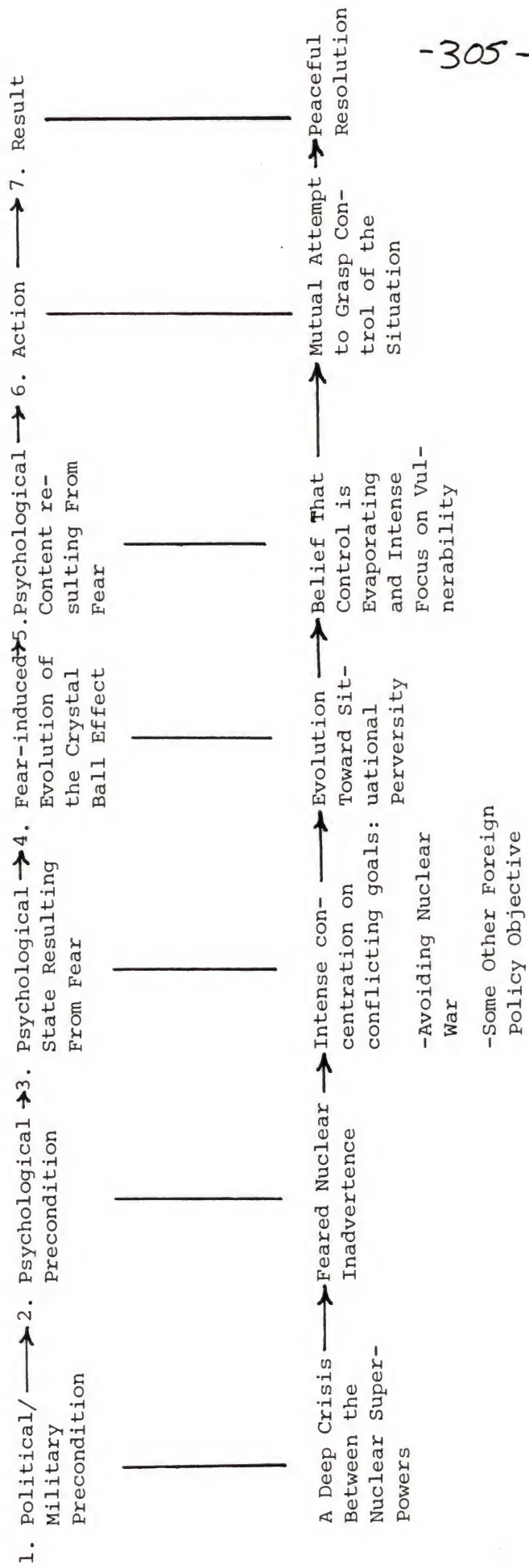


Figure 7. The adaptive psychological path to peaceful resolution in a nuclear crisis.



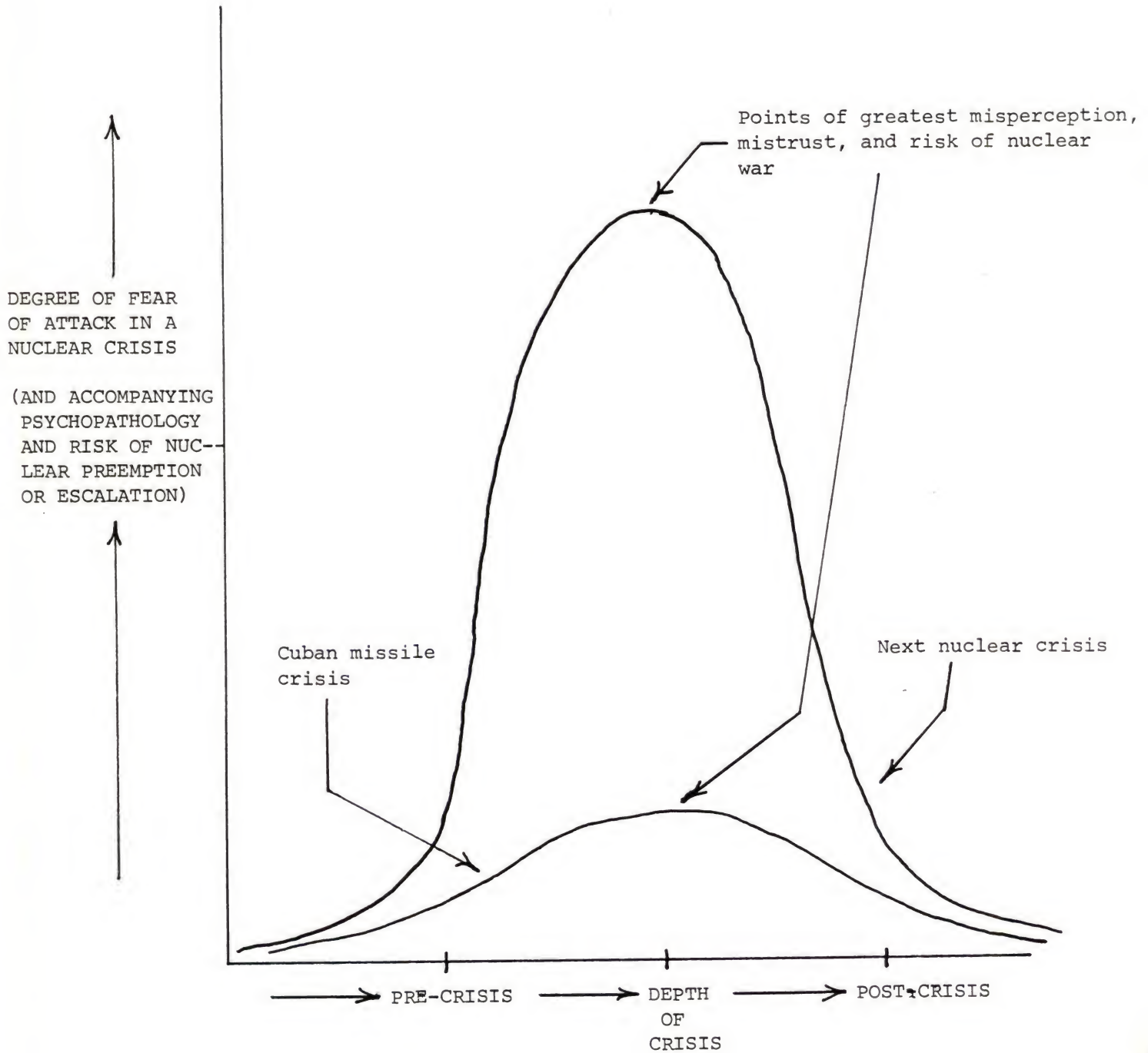


Figure 8. The psychological rationale for the alleged policy-irrelevance of the Cuban missile crisis.

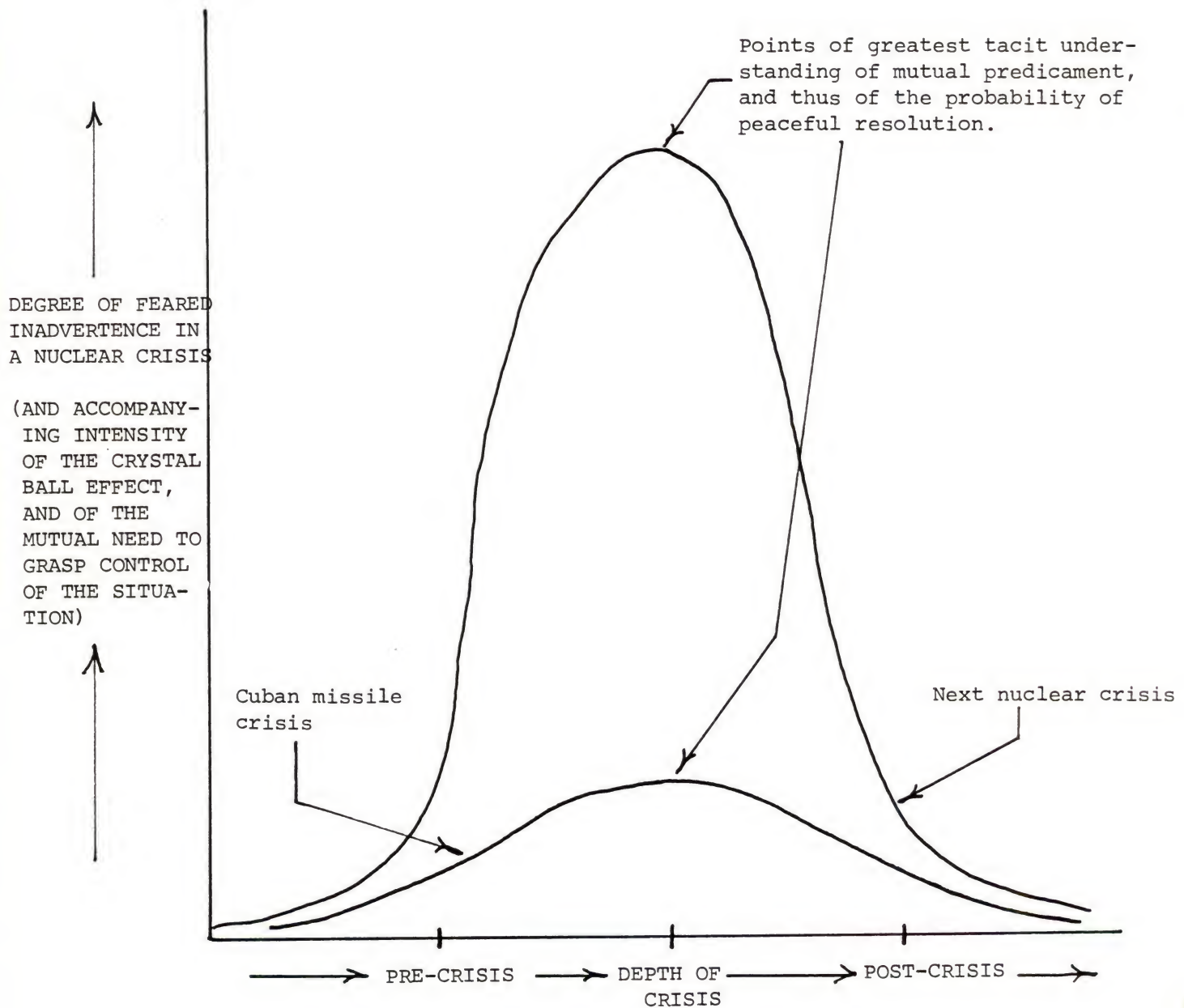


Figure 9. The psychological rationale for the policy-relevance of the Cuban missile crisis.



CF? Frege? Just Rn?

	Very Deep Cuts	Defense Dominance	"Lop off the Top"	No-First-Use
<u>Phenomenological Psychology</u>  The psychology of feared nuclear inadvertence (due to the intensi- fying crystal ball effect)	NO	NO	NO	NO
<u>Rational/irra- tional Actor Psychology</u>  The psychology of feared attack (due to stress and psychopath- ology)	? YES	? YES	? YES	? YES

Figure 10. Policy preferences for the nuclear future that follow logically from the incommensurable psychologies of avoiding nuclear war.